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Civic Writing in the Classroom

by

Sandra Stotsky

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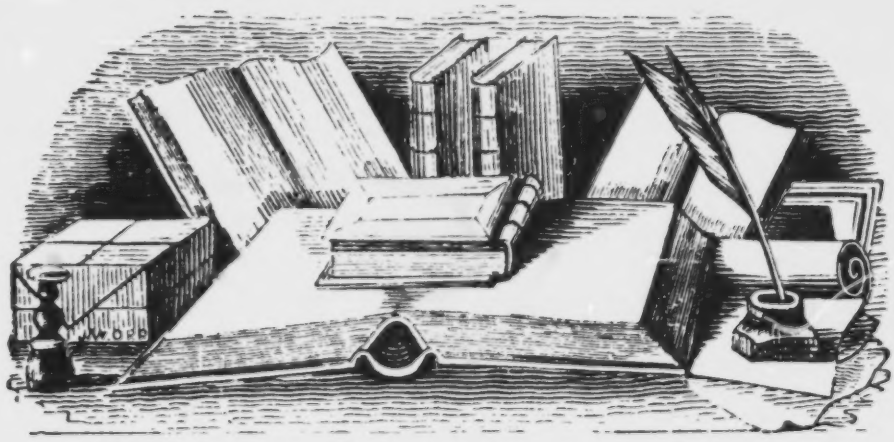

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ABSTRACT

There are few curricular programs or activities in the schools which help students develop skills that enable them to participate actively in voluntary civic or political activities. Literacy, and especially civic writing, is critical for participation in the civic process. But teaching civic writing, which is distinguished by its purposes, contexts, and a moral element in the writer's motivation, has been neglected at all levels of education. Teachers must create classroom conditions which elicit civic writing and suggest civic or political purposes for it. Examples of advocacy writing which can be used to propose a public policy issue law, to support or oppose a proposed law, to propose a law designating a state symbol or special day, to identify a problem and propose a solution, and to influence attitudes about identified social or political issues are presented. Methods of teaching and examples of civic writing which are motivated by a spirit of collaborative concern for others, especially in regard to local government, are presented. These include providing information, evaluating public programs, expressing support, and obtaining information. Civic writing can have a positive effect on the students' perceptions of themselves as writers and as citizens. (JHP)

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Sandra Stotsky

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A native of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, Sandra Stotsky traces her interest in civic participation and the process of democratic self-government to a high school history teacher, who served for many years as Moderator of Town Meeting in Bridgewater and often talked about local issues in his classes. Dr. Stotsky continues to think about the problems of local self-government from her perspective as a Town Meeting Member and as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Public Library in the Town of Brookline, where she has resided for the past twenty-four years. She currently serves as the chairperson of the Library Board.

She has also been an active member of the League of Women Voters of Brookline, serving on its Executive Board for many years and as its President for two years. She has directed a number of the League's local government study groups, and presently chairs a committee that is looking into the need for a charter commission for the Town.

Beginning her professional work in education as an elementary school teacher, Sandra Stotsky has taught at all educational levels. She regularly teaches a graduate course on the teaching of writing at the Harvard Summer School. She also is a consultant to school systems throughout the country, often for the National Faculty of Humanities, and works with teachers and administrators in all subject areas and at all levels of education.

A graduate of the University of Michigan and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, she completed her Ed.D. with Distinction at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1976. Her research has focused primarily on the relationships between reading and writing and on the use of writing to enhance thinking. She has published extensively in leading professional journals in the fields of reading and writing and has also written book reviews for the *New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

In 1984, she received a Mina Shaughnessy Scholarship from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, to begin work on *Civic Writing in the Classroom*. In 1986, she received two more grants from the Lincoln and Therese Filene Foundation to help complete the book. Currently a Research Associate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, she is now working on a book dealing with adult civic writing, in this country and elsewhere. She is also planning a week-long institute on civic literacy, funded by the Filene Foundation, to be held at Harvard during the summer of 1987.

FOREWORD

Civics involves rights and responsibilities associated with the governance of groups. In the United States, citizens have rights and responsibilities of participating in decisions that affect them and their society. They have constitutional rights of free speech and press and civic obligations to use their rights through participation in public affairs. However, citizens must develop various skills to exercise these rights and responsibilities, which include competencies in oral and written communication. Citizens who would influence and implement public policy decisions must be able to speak and write cogently and coherently. In particular, they must become adept civic writers.

To what extent are American students developing civic writing skills? A recent study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) documents major deficiencies in writing abilities of American students. The NAEP report, *The Writing Report Card: Writing Achievement in American Schools*, is based on an assessment of about 55,000 students in grades 4, 8, and 11. A major finding of the report is that only about twenty percent of our students write adequately. It seems that most students have underdeveloped skills in organizing and expressing ideas in writing. The NAEP report concludes: "In general, American students can write at a minimal level, but cannot express themselves well enough to ensure that their writing will accomplish the intended purpose."

What can be done to improve the writing skills of American students? The NAEP report recommends emphasis on writing in all subjects at every level of schooling. This recommendation reinforces the message of Sandra Stotsky's study on *Civic Writing In The Classroom*. Dr. Stotsky presents a rationale for teaching civic writing skills through the curriculum in social studies, reading, and English/language arts. She also provides guidelines to classroom practice through discussion of exemplary lessons and learning activities that have been used successfully in elementary and secondary school classrooms. Thus, Stotsky's work can be used as a practical guide to curriculum improvement, lesson planning, and classroom teaching of civic writing.

Civic Writing In The Classroom is a valuable resource for elementary and secondary school teachers. This fine book will help teachers address a perennial overarching goal—education for citizenship in a free society. The value of Dr. Stotsky's work is recognized in a letter to readers of this book, on the next page, from Eleanor Myerson, House of Representatives of Massachusetts.

John J. Patrick
Director, ERIC Clearinghouse for
Social Studies/Social Science
Education and Director, Social Studies
Development Center

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

ELEANOR MYERSON
REPRESENTATIVE
11TH SUFFOLK DISTRICT
BOSTON-BROOKLINE
175 RAWSON RD.
BROOKLINE, MA 02146

Committees on
Public Service, Vice Chairperson
Taxation

ROOM 40, STATE HOUSE
TEL. 722-2240

July 17, 1986

Dear Reader:

As a state legislator who participated in the study which led to this book, I am delighted with the result. It should be a helpful and interesting guide to assist teachers in their projects with students.

I was pleased to open my correspondence files to Dr. Stotsky and to share with her some personal experiences concerning the letters and the issues they discuss.

Most legislators respond to a thoughtful personal letter with a thoughtful personal reply. It is certainly my practice to read letters carefully and to respond in kind. Often writers will make a point I had not considered, providing information to assist me in debating a bill or making up my mind on how to vote. The more letters making the same point, the more we sit up and take notice. Letters are a very effective lobbying tool, especially if worded individually, not all copying a specific model.

Teaching young people effective communication skills gives them a lifelong tool and, hopefully, a down-to-earth view of the democratic process. For the legislators who receive the letters, they assist in keeping us lively and aware of our younger constituents and their concerns. It also can be fun for all involved.

I wish you every success as you begin this journey.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Myerson

ELEANOR MYERSON
VICE CHAIRPERSON
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE

EM/mkp

PREFACE

This book is a source of ideas for civic writing in the public schools and an argument on its behalf. It is intended primarily for curriculum coordinators and teachers—at all levels of education and in all subject areas. However, it should be interesting to anyone who cares about the vitality and meaningfulness of our civic process, and who believes that the public schools can help students participate in it more fully and adequately, both as students and later as adults.

To many people, the highly visible letter-to-the-editor (or op-ed essay) is the extent of civic writing. However, letters-to-the-editor are only one example of civic writing, and they are only a small fraction of the vast quantity of unpaid, voluntary writing that one may do as a citizen during a lifetime. Some of my own experiences as a citizen suggest other common examples of civic writing. As a Town Meeting Member in the Town of Brookline, I have helped to develop petitions, resolutions, and motions for proposals or amendments concerning local issues; Town Meeting in Brookline is not a perfunctory affair and cogent discussions of controversial issues often require as much prepared writing as extemporaneous speaking. As a long-term member of a research group for the local chapter of the League of Women Voters, studying and trying to reform various aspects of town government, I have frequently devised questionnaires, taken notes, compiled summaries, and helped to write reports for public information and political action. A decade ago, I helped a small group of parents to write numerous letters to principals, curriculum directors, the superintendent, members of the school committee, other parents, and the local newspaper to get a standing committee for handling parental concerns on school-related issues approved by the school committee. More recently, as a member of an elected citizen board responsible for the public library, I have prepared countless speeches, outlines, and memos to secure adequate funds for operating and automating the library.

The writing described above has been done as part of the civic process—activities of citizens to influence or run institutions that affect their lives in a political community. Although it may not be a regular part of our daily lives, civic writing is, nevertheless, an inseparable component of almost all the significant activities in which we participate to govern ourselves in a democratic society. Civic writing is undistinguished by any specific set of language conventions or even literary forms. Rather its purposes and the contexts for its use are the special qualities of civic writing. It may also be distinguished by a moral element in the writer's motivation, for civic writing often reflects the use of language as an instrument of conscience.

Unfortunately, few teachers devise writing assignments that ask their students to write to others for civic or political purposes. Indeed, the civic world has never been conceptualized by curriculum theorists as a functional and significant context for student writing. Thus, it is not surprising that most citizens have never learned how to use writing as a way to participate in the civic process and to define themselves as members of a particular civic community. Unless all students in our public or private schools are deliberately encouraged to write for civic purposes, they may not learn how to express ideas clearly about their political world. And they may not learn how writing can be used to enhance their perceptions of their civic worth. If all students can have frequent opportunities to write for civic purposes as part of their school experiences, they may understand more fully the civic process and how they can use writing skills to participate effectively within it. They may also develop a more meaningful identity as citizens of the United States with ethical concerns and obligations that constitute civic virtue.

The basic purpose of this book is to make a case for encouraging civic writing in the public schools and, thus, for using writing as a way to initiate students into the civic process. (Although I use the term "public schools" throughout this book, it should be understood that I do intend to include private schools within the scope of my remarks, even if I do not mention them explicitly.) Its practical value lies first in showing how civic writing has occurred as a legitimate part of classroom activities from Grade 1 to college, and then in suggesting additional ways in which it might occur.

Special attention is given to the kinds of writing activities that may engage older students in collaborative as well as adversarial modes of participation in local government. Local government is the training ground for civic participation and the development of democratic values, as the history of this country and England suggests. We need to do far more than we have done to motivate students who will soon be independent citizens and voters to participate in the voluntary work of self-government in their local communities. Above all, we need to help them value working with others to achieve civic purposes that benefit the whole community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is indebted to the Mina Shaughnessy Scholars Program of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, for a grant in 1984 that provided the freedom and time to begin work on this book. I am grateful to the Harvard Graduate School of Education for administering my grant, and to Professor Jeanne Chall for recommending and supporting my affiliation with the Reading Program. I also very much appreciate the financial and moral support I received the following year from the Lincoln and Therese Filene Foundation.

I am deeply grateful to the following people for their incisive and detailed comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript: Fred M. Newmann, Director of the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; Richard Aieta, Chairman of the Social Studies Department, Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, Massachusetts; and Carolee Fairchild, Chairman of the English Department, Bethel High School, Connecticut. I also thank Kim Michelson, a member of the Brookline School Committee, for her careful reading and comments.

A special word of thanks is owed to State Representative Eleanor Myerson and her legislative aide, Shelley Beeby, for their reading of my manuscript from their perspective as two of the real audiences for civic writing. I also acknowledge the many public officials or employees throughout the country who responded so promptly and so helpfully to my requests for information and material.

Above all, I thank Richard L. Larson, Editor of *College Composition and Communication*, who helped me through draft after draft to fulfill my original intentions for this book. His abiding concern for pedagogical usefulness and his exacting standards for coherence served as a constant spur to my thinking and writing.

Finally, I appreciate the contributions of Victor Smith and Helen Richardson, who served as reviewers of the final draft of the manuscript.

CHAPTER 1
CIVIC PARTICIPATION THROUGH CIVIC WRITING

As citizens of this democracy, you are the rulers and the ruled, the lawgivers and the law-abiding, the beginning and the end.
Adlai Stevenson

Ours is a "civic culture," which stresses participation by citizens in the political process.[1] However, there appear to be several different theories about exactly what civic participation should be in a democracy. Moreover, each theory seems to have different implications for citizen education—the way in which we prepare students in the public schools for responsible citizenship.

In one theory, sometimes termed the "elitist" approach,[2] citizens participate mainly by voting. They are expected to vote intelligently on a choice of the best qualified people for public offices. These elected officials are then expected to govern for the benefit of all and with a minimum of interference, although they should be carefully monitored by observant citizens. Only a few serve in responsible decision-making positions.

Descriptions of the "good" citizen in a representative democracy often seem to reflect this view. Consider, for example, the description that appears in a well-known high school textbook:[3]

> A good citizen participates in the political life of the society by learning about the legislative, executive, and judicial process. He also learns about public issues, office-holders, and candidates for office. During the years between elections, he reads the press, listens to news broadcasts, watches public affairs programs on television, and discusses public issues with his family, friends, and colleagues. Therefore, when he enters the polling booth on election day, he is prepared to make rational decisions.

In this description, it seems that, aside from voting at election time, a citizen's activities consist mostly of learning about public affairs and political leaders or candidates and discussing them. Given this view of what a "good" citizen should do, it is not surprising that most traditional curricula for citizen education have emphasized academic learning and the acquisition of formal knowledge about the structure of our government.

The second theory, which has been articulated most clearly in recent decades, might be called the "advocacy" approach. In this approach, decision-making officials are still a select few. However, they are not viewed as necessarily governing in the best interests of all citizens. Instead, they are seen as often, if not usually, representing only traditional interests (the "status quo") or special and narrow concerns,[4] no matter at what level of government they serve. According to this theory, then, citizens should participate by seeking to change public policies or even the political process. The nature of their relationship to their government is thus adversarial rather than monitorial and evaluative.

This view of how citizens should participate in self-government has led to several different kinds of new curricular materials for citizen education in recent years. Some stress the analysis of social problems or moral dilemmas to help students understand the sources of social conflict and the nature of political decision making. Others stress the development of critical thinking and inquiry skills, the intellectual processes which must be used for the analysis and understanding of social and political issues. Still other seek to enhance students' skills in persuasion and organization for action-oriented research projects in the community.[5]

In the third theory, which has been termed the "citizen" approach,[6] citizens see themselves as an integral part of their government, not just as monitors or adversaries. Accordingly, they should participate by actively collaborating in developing or even administering the policies and practices which shape their lives as members of a community. In this theory, the "good" citizen is similar to the one Aristotle had in mind when he wrote in *Politics, Book III*: "A citizen is one who shares in governing and in being governed," and shares both "in the administration of justice and in offices."[7] However, unlike the citizen of Aristotle's time, "good" citizens in this theory come from all groups in a community. This theory maintains that citizens develop a sense of self-worth as members of their community by helping to make or modify decisions that affect their communities. In so doing, they actualize the "democratic myth of citizen competence." This "myth" lies at the core of the third theory. It is a deep belief not only that all citizens should take part in running their political system, but also that they are capable of performing this role.

In the judgment of many political scientists and historians, the third theory, however imperfectly it has been realized, best captures the history of the American political experience and the essence of our political heritage, especially at the local level.[8] Beginning with Alexis de Tocqueville's observations of nineteenth century America,[9] students of the American political scene have regularly noted that Americans are much more

involved in voluntary civic or political activities and participate more actively in the process of self-government than citizens of any other democratic society.[10] However, we seem to have few curricular programs or activities in the schools that reflect this third theory; that is, that stress a collaborative role for citizens, especially in their local communities.

The need for such a curriculum is perhaps more critical now than it has been in recent years. The public schools again have a growing population of students that today seems to represent almost every linguistic, ethnic, religious, and racial group in the world.[11] Unlike previous educational practices, many educators now seek consciously to preserve the cultural distinctiveness of recent immigrants to this country. The literature that is taught in English classes represents a far broader cultural range than the literature that was taught in English classes years ago, and multicultural education has become a curricular strand in many public schools. While this kind of diversity may broaden and enrich the perspectives of all students, it also poses a formidable problem for developing their sense of identity as citizens of this country. Unless all students come to have some sense of a common identity, it will be difficult to evoke a willingness when they are adults to participate in the voluntary work of self-government, especially in their local communities. Moreover, they will be unlikely to consider settling conflicts about the allocation of public resources in relation to a common good. Today it is possible that our civic culture—the set of beliefs, principles, and practices by which we govern ourselves—may be the only source of values and experiences to provide a sense of a common identity to all who live here. However, our civic culture can provide this kind of identity to those who live here only if they participate in the political processes it comprises.

What do citizens need for participation in our civic process? In a report evaluating a foundation's experience in funding programs to educate adolescents and adults for citizenship, Carl Tjerandsen summarizes what he believes citizens need for meaningful participation in the process of self-government.[12] Tjerandsen proposes three broad categories of needs: ways of feeling and valuing, ways of thinking, and ways of acting. For ways of feeling and valuing, he believes that people need, above all, a sense of identity and a feeling of self-worth. They also need a social perspective—a concern for a common good—and motivation to work as part of a group. For ways of thinking, Tjerandsen suggests, first, a basic competence in speaking, reading, and writing English. He then proposes several areas of knowledge: an understanding of our form of government; an understanding of local community agencies and problems; and an understanding of our political process. In addition, he believes that citizens must be able to understand issues when they hear them discussed as well as when they read about them. For ways of acting, he suggests five broad skills: citizens need to know how to form and maintain a citizen organization, how to conduct its affairs properly, how to identify and define a problem and then organize a response to it, how to deal with government agencies, and, finally, how to develop qualities of leadership.

Two key competencies seem to underlie all the needs Tjerandsen has identified: literacy and the ability to participate actively in small groups. Clearly, opportunities for satisfying experiences in small groups can help citizens gain ways of feeling and valuing that Tjerandsen proposes as the bedrock of meaningful citizenship. Through active membership in small groups, citizens can begin to develop a sense of identity and self-esteem, and a sensitivity and obligation to a common good—qualities that will facilitate participation in political communities from which they will derive their sense of a larger political identity. Membership in small civic or political groups will also enhance their understanding of our political process and participation in it. As political scientists have frequently noted,[13] most politically active citizens are members of civic or political groups; these groups serve as a critical link between individual citizens and governmental institutions and agencies, which often appear distant and intimidating to the individual citizen.

Literacy is perhaps even more critical for participation in the civic process than experience working with others in small groups. Citizens who can read and write can participate far more effectively in formulating or modifying public policy and in keeping public officials accountable to them than those who cannot read and write. Thomas Jefferson's advocacy of free public education for all, and his support of a free press, reflected his deep belief in the importance of literacy for democratic governance. "Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe," he once wrote.[14] Jefferson was strongly interested in promoting citizen participation in the daily activities of self-government, and he saw an illiterate population as incapable of achieving a free society.[15]

Unfortunately, literacy has often seemed to refer only to the ability to read. For example, a recent book about the reading problems of illiterate adults seems to suggest that they can be empowered as citizens primarily by being taught to read.[16] Thomas Jefferson's quotation explicitly suggests this meaning. Yet the ability to express one's ideas in writing, for others to read or listen to, is by far more empowering than the ability simply to read or listen to what others have written. Kenneth Levine, a British sociologist, writes:

> . . . [I]t is, on the whole, writing competencies that are capable of initiating change. Writing conveys and records innovation, dissent, and criticism; above all, it can give access to political process generally,

where many of the possibilities for personal and social transformation lie.[17]

Consider, as one extreme, such examples of civic discourse as the *Constitution of the United States, The Federalist* papers, the *Declaration of Independence*, and *I Have a Dream* (which was composed in writing, although it was delivered as a speech). These are, of course, extraordinary examples of civic writing, composed by writers with powerful minds and passions, and they have influenced millions of people around the world. They need to be seen, however, as the far end of a long trajectory that can begin with such a seemingly humble and uninteresting piece of civic writing as a letter to a public official requesting information.

Civic writing—the unpaid writing that citizens do for civic or political purposes—is a far more salient aspect of our lives than most scholars seem to have acknowledged.[18] This writing includes such formal legal writing as speeches, petitions, and resolutions as well as such formal organizational writing as minutes of meetings, agendas, memos, and newsletters for political or civic groups.[19] It also includes a great deal of informal and personal writing, such as letters to friends, relatives, or neighbors supporting or opposing candidates for public office. Civic writing may be carefully planned in a legal or organization framework, as reports by citizens' committees or voters' guides are, or it may emerge spontaneously, as letters to legislators and newspapers usually do. It may be extensively revised through multiple drafts, as a constitution usually is, or it may be sent off in first draft form, as many letters to public officials requesting help seem to be. It may be written by isolated individuals expressing unique perspectives, or it may be written by groups of individuals trying to achieve a common goal.

Civic writing is not distinguished by any specific set of language conventions, condition for authorship, or even literary forms but by its purposes and contexts. It is also distinguished by a moral element in the writer's motivation for writing.

Unfortunately, civic writing is a kind of writing we have almost totally neglected at all levels of education. Curiously, we seem to teach writing for almost every other conceivable purpose. We teach students how to write for academic purposes, often in the form of essays and reports, because academic writing is necessary for academic learning. We teach them how to write for social purposes, because social relationships are a fundamental aspect of our lives at any age, and writing personal letters, sympathy notes, or invitions, for example, is one significant way in which we maintain these relationships. We teach them how to compose stories, poems, and other kinds of imaginative literature, because we believe students should learn how to use writing as one of the many ways in which we may provide pleasure for ourselves or for others. We teach them how to write as consumers or for vocational purposes, often in the form of business letters, resumes, or letters of application, because most occupations today require writing of some kind, and our interests as consumers often necessitate writing. Yet, we rarely teach students how to shape their ideas about civic or political issues for audiences beyond the classroom, even though preparing the young for responsible citizenship is a major purpose of public schools. From this perspective, preparation for participating in a civic community should be a primary purpose for teaching writing in the public schools. Moreover, it is an end to which all learning in publicly supported schools should be directed in part.

The next chapter includes a discussion about why the public schools have, in general, not taught students how to participate as writers (or as speakers) in the civic process. It also suggests why we should consider locating some of the responsibility for citizen education in a school's writing program. If the schools can stimulate future citizens to be civic writers as well as civic readers, they may help a new generation of students to acquire the sense of a common identity they need for responsible citizenship and revitalize the "civic consciousness" that Morris Janowitz finds missing today.[20] They may also help to create the kind of political community Benjamin Barber has recently proposed—a strong democracy in which more rather than fewer citizens participate in ongoing political debate and decision making, in local government particularly, so that a sense of community grows out of participation as much as participation grows out of a sense of community.[21]

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CHAPTER 2
CITIZEN EDUCATION THROUGH CIVIC WRITING

In view of the significant role that civic writing plays in the basic activities of self-government, especially local government, it is disconcerting to discover that schools often fail to show students that writing—or reading—matters at all for citizenship. One may find no explicit connection between literacy and the activities of citizens for self-government in some of the philosophies of education that have been set forth by teachers and administrators to support the purposes of their English programs, at the secondary level especially. For example, the framework for the English curriculum for grades 9 to 12 in the Philadelphia Public Schools, issued in 1982, states in the introduction to the teacher that the purpose for developing basic language skills is to help students "(1) to use these skills to enhance learning in all subjects of the curriculum, (2) to apply them to real life and career situations, and (3) to understand themselves and others through reading and responding to . . . literature."[1] In the guide containing the high school curriculum objectives developed by the Boston Public School in 1983, one of the general goals listed in the section entitled Philosophy and Goals is "helping students to understand the importance of oral and written communication skills in the workplace and other real-life situations."[2] The philosophy of the English language arts syllabus for the South Burlington Middle School and High School, issued in 1985, states that the ability to use and understand English is essential to one's growth, education, work, and life.[3] Under goals, students should "understand that the work they do in the language arts classroom relates to their work in other academic disciplines and to their life in the 'real world'." The closest link we find between the goals of a school's English program and civic participation is apparently in the use of writing for "real-life" activities, which that usually remain unspecified.

One can occasionally find an explicit link between literacy and citizenship in curriculum guides designed specifically for reading programs. For example, the reading curriculum guide for the New Britain Public Schools, Grade K through 9, issued in 1984, states in its introduction that the "educational philosophy of the Reading Curriculum Committee reflects the basic belief that reading is essential to all learning throughout life and that literacy is basic to the intelligent functioning of citizens within a democratic society."[4] Perhaps it has been easier for reading educators to understand that students need to read to function effectively as citizens. Nevertheless, it seems that many educators have failed to formulate, as one specific goal of their English program, their intention to help students learn how to communicate ideas about civic issues in writing as part of the process of self-government.

What could account for the failure of many educators to specify the role of the English program in citizen education? One major source of this failure may be that, historically, English programs, especially at the secondary level, have focused on the study of literary texts. As a consequence, students tend to write only on literary topics in English classes, usually in critical essays, or they compose imaginative fiction or poetry. Even when teachers use the lessons suggested in composition and grammar textbooks, they are unlikely to find assignments that have civic purposes and involve real audiences beyond the classroom. For example, one recent high school text for grade 12 contains four major sections: one on personal writing, another on journalistic writing, a third on literary analysis, and a fourth on writing an informational report.[5] Another recent grade 12 text contains lessons on writing essays, a library research paper, a literary analysis paper, answers to essay exam questions, and social and business letters.[6] College instructors are also unlikely to find civic writing assignments in their composition textbooks. For example, in one well-known and extensively-used text, the only non-academic piece of writing developed in a series of lessons is the business letter; students are taught how to write a letter of inquiry, a letter asking for an adjustment, and a letter of application with a data sheet.[7] Some English teachers believe that the "opinion" essay they teach students to write is an example of civic writing, but the opinion essay often suggested in high school composition texts is rarely a response to an existing situation or political issue in the student's community, written for, and sent to, a real audience. In general, civic projects or planned discussions about local or national issues rarely take place in English classes. Eliot Wigginton's inclusion of a unit on county government in his Foxfire-oriented composition course stands out as a remarkable exception to a general rule.[8]

Another reason why there may be no explicit link between English programs and the preparation of students for civic life may be the fact that another area of the public school curriculum, the social studies, bears the explicit burden of citizen education.[9] Citizenship is even evaluated with the social studies by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Currently, citizen education takes place in a variety of ways in social studies courses, but most often it emerges from discussions involving moral dilemmas or social issues, or

from formal lessons on United States history and the structure of American government.

It might seem reasonable to expect civic writing to occur naturally in classes on civics or American government. Yet, an examination of *Magruder's American Government*[10] (the most widely used high school text on American government)[11] suggests that academic writing is as much the staple diet for writing in civics or American government courses as it is in other social studies courses. There are dozens of writing activities suggested throughout the book, usually at the end of each chapter. Seventeen could be labeled civic writing, but sixteen of these seventeen suggested activities are simply invitations to public officials or important people in a community to come to class to discuss some aspect of their responsibilities.[12] Moreover, these assignments could be done by telephone as easily as in writing.

When we examine special curriculum material on current issues, such as *Close up Special Focus: Energy*, a curriculum package designed by the Close Up Foundation to provide an analysis of energy policies, we find no writing activities.[13] Although academic writing assignments do appear in some of the foundation's other curriculum materials on current issues, no genuine civic writing appears built into the learning and use of their content.

Civic writing may, of course, occur in specially designed civic projects. For example, one action-oriented English/social studies program designed for the secondary school recommends a great deal of civic writing—speeches, position papers, news releases, brochures, formal resolutions, letters to officials or other community people—as part of the citizen action projects they outline.[14] But few high schools have provided their students with opportunities to participate in such projects.

Even if there are a few imaginative civics or American government teachers designing substantive civic writing assignments for their students, the number of students affected by such teachers is probably small. This conclusion would seem to be supported by the results of the study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress showing a decline among 17-year-olds from 1969 to 1976 in writing letters to public officials and signing petitions.[15]

Other subjects in the elementary and secondary school also have a narrow perspective; the writing that teachers ask students to do in these courses is designed primarily to help them develop a good grasp of significant ideas and supporting facts in a particular discipline. Students may write lab reports or essays or answer questions in writing in science or health classes. However, they are almost never asked to shape this academic knowledge for purposes in the community outside the school. Moreover, this writing is almost always for the teacher. Sometimes students write for other students, or sometimes for themselves, as in journals or learning logs, but they rarely write for an audience external to the classroom. What students learn usually remains strictly academic knowledge—abstract generalizations, and facts without explicit social or political relevance. There is probably no area in the curriculum with a greater need for students to learn how to shape their knowledge and ideas for audiences beyond the classroom than the science class.

For a variety of reasons, therefore, it is likely that most students leave high school without becoming aware of the importance of large bodies of knowledge for civic life and without learning how to shape this knowledge in a variety of forms of writing, for a variety of readers beyond the classroom, and for a variety of civic purposes. They fail to learn that the modes of inquiry and the research techniques taught in their English, science, and social science classes are as necessary for civic purposes as for academic purposes. Indeed, they fail to learn that the basic reason they are asked to learn academic ways of asking questions, finding information, and then organizing their own ideas about this information is for application to their lives in a civic community.

In a report on citizen education today for the U.S. Office of Education, Elizabeth Farquhar and Karen Dawson point out that citizen education was once the primary focus of the public school curriculum.[16] It was also the underlying purpose of higher education as well. In an essay urging renewed attention to the idea of citizen education for college students, R. Freeman Butts points out that the very idea of a liberal education originated not only with the humanities but with the idea of citizenship.[17] In his essay, he calls for a revival of civic learning by means of a prescribed core curriculum in order to prepare college students once again for their "essential public, civic function." The responsibility of the English language arts program, and the writing program in particular, for preparing students in the public schools for citizenship in a democratic society needs to be spelled out and revitalized in both the elementary and secondary school curriculum as well. However, to fulfill this responsibility effectively, the charge must go beyond simply preparing students for citizenship. Students need activities that give them experiences with the civic process, and writing activities are possible for all students in all classrooms.

There are several system-wide benefits that might flow from locating some of the responsibility for citizen education in a school's writing program. To begin with, it would make a school-wide focus on civic writing possible and the entire faculty responsible for seeing that it happens. Writing is the responsibility of all disciplines, and all teachers would share the responsibility for developing their students' motivation and ability to participate as writers in the civic process. Even though many

teachers beyond the English department do not act on that responsibility, a clear expectation by school committees, administrators, and parents that they share this responsibility can serve to stimulate a larger number to assume it.

Secondly, it would facilitate interdisciplinary approaches for developing the content of civic writing. Because civic writing frequently draws upon the content of science and the social studies, it might encourage all teachers engaged in the literary program—English teachers, reading teachers, Chapter I teachers, or special education teachers—to collaborate occasionally with colleagues in other areas for some of their students' writing assignments, and, in some cases, to tap a new source of topics for some of their students' reading. Reciprocally, it might encourage science and social studies teachers, and even foreign language teachers, to collaborate with English or reading teachers in devising civic writing assignments that could conclude units of academic work in their disciplines. The writing that students do could be credited in more than one subject, a double grading system facilitating this arrangement. With such cooperative endeavors, writing would serve as a way to integrate the curriculum.

Finally, by giving students opportunities to participate as writers in the civic life of their community, we would make civic learning an active, rather than a passive, experience for them. As students commit their ideas to writing and work them out for others to see, they may learn at a far deeper level than by simply reading or listening to others. Writing is not only a way in which we communicate ideas, it is also a way in which we develop and often discover ideas. As writers think about what they have written and try to clarify what they are trying to say, they enhance their understanding of both the subject of their thinking and their own thoughts about it. This is as true for civic writing as it is for academic or literary writing.

Encouraging students to acquire civic learning through their writing activities might also help to improve their speaking skills. Although we tend to think of speaking as a language activity that precedes writing, the opposite is apt to be the case for civic purposes. Skilled civic speaking is almost always prepared speaking, especially for the novice speaker, and writing is usually the basis for prepared civic speaking. Students can more easily rework rambling speeches, poorly worded motions, or pointless questions if their ideas are first written down rather than uttered spontaneously. Most of the oral skills citizens need to acquire can be developed through civic writing activities.

Clearly, an approach to civic learning through civic writing would supplement, not supplant, other approaches to citizen education. It would not diminish teachers' efforts to develop the other civic skills that need to be learned, or lessen the need to teach the social and political knowledge students need for civic literacy and for intelligent civic behavior. Nor would it pose values to be taught other than those we now subscribe to as part of a democratic philosophy of government. In fact, civic writing may be the best means we have for helping students in the public schools develop and integrate the speaking and reading skills, the formal learning, and the social and political values they need for responsible participation in the life of a democratic society.

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CHAPTER 3
CREATING CONTEXTS AND PURPOSES FOR CIVIC WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM: ADVOCACY WRITING

Teachers must create classroom conditions that elicit civic writing and suggest appropriate civic or political purposes for it. If not, most students will lack adequate civic writing skills. In this chapter, examples are presented of advocacy writing. Their purpose is to influence attitudes about proposed laws, administrative decisions, or social or political issues. This broad purpose is divided into five specific purposes to present a clearer picture of different types of advocacy writing. The first three purposes concern students' efforts to support or oppose a proposed law or administrative decision. These are discussed first because the ability of citizens to make or modify law, whether directly or indirectly, lies at the heart of a democratic form of government. The other two purposes deal with advocacy writing that is usually unrelated to a proposed law or administrative decision.

In each section, several examples of each purpose are presented in combination with ways teachers created, or happened to find, a context for their students' civic writing activities.[1] Most of the examples come from English, language arts, or social studies classes. But examples are also included from a science class. The examples span all educational levels. Although many teachers might be interested only in what colleagues at their own level have done, Secondary or postsecondary teachers are urged to find out what elementary school teachers have done. Most of the writing activities found in the elementary school could just as easily have taken place in high school or beyond.

To Propose a Law about a Public Policy Issue. Teachers may encourage students to develop and support a bill or a petition for a law about a social, political, or legal issue. The issue may concern the students particularly, or it may concern the general welfare. The students' writing may be directed to state or national legislators or to a local governing body. Three examples illustrate this purpose for writing.

Several years ago, sixth-grade students in Easton, Massachusetts developed bills in two different civic projects, one on a matter that concerned them particularly and one on a matter that concerned the general welfare. Under the guidance of their teacher, Ann Hoyle, students in a special program for academically able students conducted an extensive campaign to obtain a waiver exempting their school bank from the General Laws of Massachusetts.[2] The school bank, which was owned by 233 student shareholders and operated by Mrs. Hoyle's students, had been devised as an educational experience in banking for middle school students. The bank had only one function: to lend money to students in the school, in amounts up to $1.50, for milk and lunch money. However, by charging 8% interest per week on loans of 75 cents (or 400% interest per year), the bank ran afoul of state statutes and was closed down by two state bank examiners in April 1983, for "usurious" practices. Three other violations of state statutes were also found; students were collecting loans without a license, transacting business under a title including the word "bank," and operating a bank without a charter. Mrs. Hoyle then presented a proposal to their school committee to ask permission for her class to file legislation for a waiver; her students prepared and gave supporting speeches for the proposal at the committee meeting. After receiving permission, her students developed the petition, wrote letters to various public officials, and secured sponsorship from their state senator and state representative. While the bill went through the legislative process, students prepared and delivered speeches at the state house on behalf of their petition. They won their waiver, and legislation now exists in Massachusetts allowing students in grades four to eight to operate banks that lend money; no limits are placed on the amount of interest charged so long as the assets do not exceed $500.

As part of a group of related projects, Mrs. Hoyle also helped her students to file a petition for mandatory seat belt legislation in the state legislation for two years in a row. To support their proposed legislation, the students attended a School Bus Safety Hearing and a Public Safety Committee Hearing at the State House and gave testimony. The students also received permission from their School Committee to conduct a Seat Belt Safety Program locally and to ask their Board of Selectmen for a Seat Belt Safety Proclamation. The students researched the topic of seat-belt safety by conducting surveys within the schools to determine the number of students and family members presently "buckling up." They also conducted surveys in the community to compile statistics from doctors, emergency room nurses, the police and fire departments, and insurance companies. In response to the students' request, the Selectmen issued a proclamation submitted by the students (see Figure 1) and later issued a citation requiring all town employees to wear seat belts. The students also requested a State Proclamation for Seat-Belt Safety and attended the "signing" of the proclamation with the governor at the State House. They promoted their seat-belt safety campaign in local shop-

FIGURE 1

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, About 900 people in this country are killed every week in motor vehicle accidents; and

WHEREAS, Another 10,000 people are injured every day in motor vehicle accidents; and

WHEREAS, Three out of four crashes happen within 25 miles of home; and

WHEREAS, The leading cause of death among people 44 years of age and younger in this country is motor vehicle accidents (50,000 fatalities annually); and

WHEREAS, The simplest and most effective protection against possible injury or death in motor vehicle accidents is a fastened safety belt; and

WHEREAS, Safety belts cut the number of serious injuries received by 50%; and

WHEREAS, Safety belts cut fatalities by 60 to 70 percent; and

WHEREAS, The "Easton Seat Belt Safety" campaign conducted by HAL students in the Easton Public Schools will ask volunteers to sign pledges to "buckle up for safety" and promote an awareness of seat belt safety in Easton; and

NOW, THEREFORE, We the Board of Selectmen, of the Town of Easton do hereby proclaim the 101 critical days from December 10, 1984 through March 20, 1985 to be "Easton Seat Belt Safety Winter". By encouraging every driver and passenger in Easton to wear safety belts in every trip in a car, lives should be saved, the severity of personal injuries would be reduced, and we would be promoting greater safety on our highways, roadways, and streets.

Given under our hands and seal this 10th day of December in the year of Our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Eighty-four.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

NB 10

FIGURE 2

NINETY-NINTH CONGRESS

AL SWIFT, WASHINGTON, CHAIRMAN

JOSEPH M. GAYDOS, PENNSYLVANIA
CHARLES ROSE, NORTH CAROLINA
LEON E. PANETTA, CALIFORNIA
MARY ROSE OAKAR, OHIO
WILLIAM (BILL) CLAY, MISSOURI
SAM GEJDENSON, CONNECTICUT

WILLIAM M. THOMAS, CALIFORNIA
BARBARA F. VUCANOVICH, NEVADA
PAT ROBERTS, KANSAS
BILL FRENZEL, MINNESOTA

KARL J. SANDSTROM, ELECTIONS COUNSEL
KATHRYN ERICKSON JARVIS, STAFF DIRECTOR

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on House Administration
Subcommittee on Elections
802 House Annex 1
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 226-7616

June 21, 1985

Tim Nardell
2515 Topaz Dr.
Novato, California 94947

Dear Mr. Nardell:

The Subcommittee on Elections of the House Administration Committee has scheduled a hearing on H.R. 1761 for Tuesday, July 2nd in San Francisco. It will be held in the Ceremonial Courtroom of the Federal Building, at 3:00 p.m.

We appreciate your willingness to be among those who will testify, and assist the Subcommittee in its work on this subject.

In compliance with our Committee rules we would like to request that you bring 45 copies of your written testimony with you to the hearing. If possible, please send 5 copies to the Subcommittee in advance. Please send them to:

Subcommittee on Elections
802 House Annex 1
Washington, D.C. 20515

We would appreciate it if you could have them here by Thursday, June 27th.

All written statements will be included in the hearing record in full. Because we anticipate a series of witnesses, in order to maximize the opportunity for questions and exchange with the Members of the Subcommittee, we ask that you limit your oral presentation to no more than ten minutes.

Thank you again for your assistance. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the Elections staff: Kathy Jarvis or Karl Sandstrom at (202) 226-7616.

ping malls by encouraging shoppers to sign "Buckle Up" pledges. They also campaigned in elementary school classrooms by presenting skits and speeches and sponsoring contests. Altogether, the students did an exceptional amount of civic writing of all kinds to advance the state and local laws they had proposed.

What Virginia Franklin did with her classes in an elective high school government course in San Rafael, California over a ten-year period is another remarkable example of a teacher helping students to bring a genuine civic concern to the attention of public officials.[3] Since 1976, her students have had five bills introduced in the California State Assembly to allow any citizen eligible by reason of age to vote in the November election to vote in the immediately preceding June primary election for the same office, even if still seventeen at the time. The students have also had several similar bills introduced by their congressional representative at the federal level, most recently in 1985. As Dr. Franklin described their efforts in a January 1982, newsletter of the National Council for the Social Studies, her students had to do a great deal of research to find out about the history of voting rights, age requirements, equal protection rulings by the courts, and legislative procedures. This necessitated writing good letters which would elicit responses from important people in government and in public interest groups. For the bills at the federal level, a letter-writing campaign took place with other high schools in the districts of the members of the House Administration Committee of the House of Representatives. Students also wrote to the County Clerks in large cities in the ten states which already provide for the vote in the primary for anyone 18 years old in November. Each time, they received very supportive letters in return and prepared informational packets for members of the legislatures of California and for members of the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives.

Figure 2 (page 11) is a copy of the letter one of her students received form the Subcommittee on Elections of the Committee on House Administration announcing a scheduled hearing in San Francisco in the summer of 1985 on the students' most recent federal bill. Figure 3 is a copy of the testimony prepared and given by this student at the hearing. Although the students' state bill has failed to obtain the two-thirds majority necessary for passage in the California State Assembly, the federal bill has not yet been heard in full committee by the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives.

FIGURE 3

TO: Committee of House Administration
Subcommittee on Elections

TESTIMONY OF J. TIMOTHY NARDELL
ON H.R. 1761

I strongly support H.R. 1761 and hope that it will quickly be ratified by the House of Representatives and the entire Congress.

Because I was not yet 18 years old, I was unable to vote in the 1984 June primaries, yet I was eligible to vote in the November election. The situation seemed unfair to me. The law prevented me from taking full part in my first election. Because I was unable to cast a vote for a party candidate, I do not feel that I fully participated in the electoral process. Although I voted in the Fall election, I did not give any real support to either candidate. I did not contribute my youthful enthusiasm to either political party. My vote in November was disillusioning.

However, some of my peers did contribute in the June primary. They were fortunate enough to have been born before the date of the primary. Because of a few months difference in age, they were permitted to vote while I was not. They did not seem any more capable of making political decisions than I. It was frustrating to watch friends who were unaware of the issues vote. It was even more frustrating to see peers who were eligible to vote neglect the privilege.

As I am certain you are all aware, young people constitute the most apathetic group of voters today. The 18 to 24 age group consistently has a lower percentage of voter participation than any other block. H.R. 1761 could help change this unfortunate situation. If more high school seniors were able to take an active part in the political process, high schools could rise to the task of providing voter registration to the students. Registration drives in the high schools would increase youth participation. Good voting habits, established early, would continue for a lifetime. We would be using our public schools, the foundation of our democracy, to strengthen the democratic process.

H.R. 1761 is a non-partisan bill. As we are all well aware, the state of America's youth has changed since the 70s. Young people today can no longer be placed in easily defined political categories. We should view this resolution as a way to help integrate young people into the political process, not as a way to harness increased youth support for a particular set of policies. Everyone would benefit if more citizens became involved in the political process.

As the law now stands, regulations for voting in the primaries vary from state to state. Minors who will be 18 at the time of the general election are allowed to vote in the primaries of 10 states. For federal elections, uniform voting procedures should be enacted.

I hope that you will join me in support of H.R. 1761. Thank you very much.

These three examples show how two teachers found contexts that gave their students an opportunity to formulate and support legislation about a social, political, or legal issue. In Ann Hoyle's projects, student writing was politically effective. In Virginia Franklin's project, it still may have political consequences. The fundamental value of such writing lies in gaining through experience the knowledge that all citizens have the right to request their representatives to introduce legislation they believe might benefit them or the general welfare. (Only in Massachusetts, however, are state legislatures required to file a citizen's petition, whether or not the legislator approves of it. This is known as the right of free petition.)

To Support or Oppose a Proposed Law or Decision about a Public Policy Issue. Opportunities for students to propose and support their own legislation on a public policy issue are not easily come by. It is much easier for teachers to invite their students to support or oppose legislation or decisions proposed by others on a public policy issue. As in the first section, the proposed law or decision may affect them specifically, or it may affect the general welfare. Three examples illustrate this purpose for writing.

In the first example, an English teacher helped a group of tenth-grade students with below-average writing skills in Brattleboro Union High School, Vermont, to write to a state legislator about proposed legislation on an issue that might concern them directly.[4] The teacher, Nancy Olson, was aware of the growing concern about fatal automobile accidents involving teenagers driving at night. She also knew that the state government of Vermont was considering establishment of teenage driving curfews. One day in the spring of 1984, she found an article in their local newspaper mentioning a debate on teenage driving curfews in the Connecticut legislature, which was based on a proposal by State Senator Regina Smith. After having her students read and discuss the article, Mrs. Olson suggested that they write their opinions to Senator Smith. The students brainstormed individual responses, which were pooled while the teacher acted as recorder. The class then dictated the letter while she wrote the rough draft on an overhead transparency. She then typed the final draft, shared it with the class, and mailed it.

After receiving Senator Smith's reply, the class agreed to Mrs. Olson's suggestion that they compile the exchange of letters as a letter-to-the-editor, since the local newspaper had been running a series of articles on the subject (see Figure 4 for a copy of this letter-to-the-editor). Mrs. Olson indicated that she tried not to direct content for both letters. She asked questions when the intended point was not clear to her, but she tried not to interfere with logic, order, or dictation. As a postscript, a bill to establish a teenage curfew was introduced in the Vermont legislature in March 1985. Although it was carried over into 1986, it died in the Senate Committee on Transportation in May 1986.

FIGURE 4

LETTER BOX

SHOULD THERE BE A CURFEW FOR TEENAGE DRIVERS?

Editor of *The Reformer:*

In our tenth grade English class we have been discussing the issue of teenagers and alcohol because we have been reading the articles in *The Reformer*. As a class we sent the following letter to State Sen. Regina Smith of Connecticut.

Dear Senator Smith:

We are a class of tenth grade students at Brattleboro Union High School in Vermont. We have reviewed the column by Michael McManus on a teenage driving curfew. (*Reformer*, May 21).

We are all highly opposed to this curfew for several reasons. One, take into consideration the number of adult crashes during these same hours, midnight to 5 a.m. Shouldn't adults have a curfew, too?

Also, the late movies in our area don't get out until 11 p.m. or later, and many of us live out of town. Another reason we are against this curfew is that more 18-year-olds drink than 16-year-olds. If 16-year-olds can't drive, then they'll start to hang out more with older kids who can drive and who can drink legally.

A fourth reason we are against such a curfew has to do with the lack of sidewalks in our rural area. Prevented from driving, more teenagers will have to walk or ride bicycles. More pedestrians and more bicycle riders will make rural driving more difficult and dangerous.

Therefore, we believe there would be more crashes with a curfew than without.

How many 16- and 17-year-olds are out driving at 4 a.m.?

We are asking you to think about the proposed curfew. Will it accomplish what it is supposed to do?

Thank you.

...

On June 6 we received the following reply from Senator Smith.

Dear Students:

Thank you for writing regarding my proposed curfew bill.

I appreciated your comments. However, I do believe the statistics in other states that have enacted such legislation provide compelling supportive evidence.

The numbers of crashes and fatalities among teenagers are extremely high in comparison to other age brackets. And I personally believe if such a measure can save lives and prevent serious injuries, then it is an important health and safety measure to be implemented.

Once again, I appreciate your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

Regina Smith

State Senator

...

Donald Damian, Mark Lane, Travis Slade, Tim Holt, Shannon Covey, Simon Wong, Mindy Walsh, Barbara Wheelock, Shane Brackett, Terry Nebelski, Ken McAllister, Patricia Boyd, Terri-Lee Ainsworth, Tammy Gouin, Brian Sanderson, Bill Johnson.

The members of Mrs. Olson's
Tenth Grade BUHS English Class

In the following example, a number of students in Greene County, Alabama, were encouraged to write in response to a newspaper article an editorial about a decision that clearly affected them.[5] The March 27, 1985 issue of the *Greene County Democrat* carried a story about a decision by the local school board members to authorize a trip for themselves to a National School Convention in Anaheim, California, at a time when the board was being forced to cut back on teachers and instructional resources. An editorial expressed the newspaper's opinion that board members should not, at board expense, go to a convention in Disneyland. That week, a number of teachers brought copies of the newspaper to class for reading and discussion and suggested that students write to the paper expressing their reactions to the story and the editorial. In the next week's edition, the newspaper reported receiving forty letters written by students in grades five, six, seven, and ten and printed excerpts from twelve of them. Figure 5 shows some excerpts. The students' remarks showed their understanding of the relationship between local finances and the quality of school programs and staff, as well as their concern about the appropriateness of the school board's decision. Although the students' letters appeared after two members of the board made the trip to California and, thus, did not affect their decision to make the trip, nevertheless, the published letters attested to the students' concern and called attention to their concern about the school board's decisions.

FIGURE 5

Letters To The Editor,
The *Greene County Democrat*,
April 13, 1985

Editor's Note. The following excerpts are representative of 40 letters received by the *Democrat* from Greene County public schools students in the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 10th grades. Their expressions are reactions to a story and editorial in last week's *Democrat* that described substantial cuts the school board is making in personnel and other areas, and the plan of certain board members to override a previous decision, not to travel out-of-state at board expense. Two of the board members made the much criticized trip to the national school board convention last week.

Dear Editor:

It is wrong for the school board to spend money on trips and things that are not needed. All schools should have a band. How else are the children to learn music? We need more music in the world.

Dear Editor:

I don't think that it is a good idea to fire teachers who are in some of the main subjects. We need English and Social Studies.

Dear Editor:

I feel that it is wrong to fire 13 teachers. The remaining teachers could not teach that many children. I think that the money should be raised.

Dear Editor:

We need more teachers. The elementary library should not be combined with the high school library at Paramount. It will be too crowded and some students will get behind in their research.

Another example of a timely letter to a legislator on proposed legislation occurred at a community college in a course on radiation biology and protection.[6] The instructor, Sandra Lawrence, noticed an article on irradiation of food in a current issue of a popular journal at the time her class was studying the effects of radiation on molecular substances. Because the article noted that legislation concerning the labeling of irradiated foods was in progress in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, she asked students to read the article carefully, note the claims by both advocates and opponents of irradiation, and take a stand on the topic. She then directed them to write a letter to their own representative or senator, urging them to vote for or against the bill. Students were instructed to tell their representatives or senators who they were, what they had studied about the topic, why they as consumers, as students of radiation biology, and as citizens were concerned about the issue, and the reasons for their stance.

Figure 6 is a copy of one student's letter to Senator Edward Kennedy. Figure 7 (page 16) is a copy of the reply she received from his office.

FIGURE 6
A Letter to Senator Kennedy

Dear Senator Kennedy:

I am a medical radiography student at Bunker Hill Community College in Charleston, Massachusetts. We are currently studying the effects of ionizing radiation on biological tissue. I recently read an article entitled "The Newest Probelm on the Food Front," by Anne Witte Garland, which dealt with the issue of food irradiation. Senator Kennedy, I must urge you to oppose the Federal Food Irradiation Development and Control Act of 1985, unless the proper safety precautions are attached to this legislation.

As you know, radiation is a highly unpredictable substance which should be studied extensively before it is used as a means of food preservation. I realize it has been studied since the early 1960s, but there are still questions which must be answered.

When food is irradiated, most of the rays pass directly through it. But, some of these rays may remain inside the substance making and breaking chemical bonds. Some of these bonds form new substances which could be harmful if ingested. The Public Citizen Health Research Group in Washington, D.C. wants to perform tests on these substances to determine if they are toxic or not. Tests done on animals should be done before introducing these substances to the public.

I studied the effects of irradiated water within a living cell. When some of the chemical bonds in water molecules are broken, three possible lethal end products can result: hydrogen, oxygen, and hydrogen peroxide. Some of these products are deadly to the cell because they normally don't exist there and take up the space of the needed water molecules. Now, I understand that a molecule of food is no longer living, but, what really happens to the food? Would you want your family purchasing a pork roast which has been irradiated? Do you want them eating something which on one really knows what it contains? Do you want to be held responsible if someone dies because they ate something which was irradiated?

The only way to prevent these problems is to label all goods which have been irradiated and to allow states the privelege to refuse the sale of irradiated food products. The problems of irradiation of food must be looked at before the public is subjected to it.

Thank you for your time.

These examples show how teachers from grade five to college level found contexts that gave their students an opportunity to influence the attitudes of their legislators, other public officials, the public, or other students concerning proposed legislation or decisions about a public policy issue. Was this writing politically effective? In Nancy Olson's small-scale project, it is possible that her students' letter to the editor had some effect on public or official opinion in their community. The letter her students wrote to the state senator in Connecticut clearly did not change the senator's position on the issue. However, it is unlikely that it would have done so in any event, since non-constituents' writing rarely influences a legislator. Letters from constituents, whether or not they are students, always carry more weight than non-constituents' writing, because the writers are present and future voters in the legislator's own district.

An effective letter to a legislator or other public official is not necessarily one which secures the official's agreement with the writer's point of view and affects a particular action. An effective letter is read for its content and then answered respectfully regarding its content. This is clearly the case with letters to the legislators from Nancy Olson's and Sandra Lawrence's classes. And with respect to a letter to an editor, the criterion for effectiveness is whether the letter is published for the public to read, as happened with the letters by students in Brattleboro, Vermont, and in Green County, Alabama. Thus, the writing of these students was true civic writing, not simply an academic exercise. The writing itself, and the responses these students received to their writing, must have taught all of them a great deal about the civic process.

To Propose a Law Designating a State Symbol or Special Day. Many teachers have helped their students develop a bill or petition proposing a state symbol or a special day in order to teach their students how a bill becomes law. Some of the bills students have developed are clearly more meaningful than others, but as a group these bills do not deal with social or political concerns. Sometimes students decide themselves what they wish to propose in relation to something they are studying in school. Sometimes teachers give their students a stimulus for their ideas by telling them about some of the official state emblems or seals the state already has, or the special days for which governors issue proclamations. A few examples of these projects are described here.

To supplement a unit in American history, William Hayner, a fifth-grade teacher in Groton, Massachusetts, encouraged his class in the fall of 1983 to consider developing a bill in order to learn how a bill becomes a law.[7] Hayner proposed several criteria for them to use. He suggested that they choose: (1) a subject that had "meaning," (2) a bill that would not force anything on anybody, and (3) a project in which they could do all of the research work and writing. His

FIGURE 7

DON NICKLES, OKLAHOMA
PAULA HAWKINS, FLORIDA
STROM THURMOND, SOUTH CAROLINA
LOWELL P. WEICKER, JR., CONNECTICUT
MALCOLM WALLOP, WYOMING
CHARLES E. GRASSLEY, IOWA

HOWARD M. METZENBAUM, OHIO
SPARK M. MATSUNAGA, HAWAII
CHRISTOPHER J. DODD, CONNECTICUT
PAUL SIMON, ILLINOIS
JOHN F. KERRY, MASSACHUSETTS

RONALD F. DOCKSAI, STAFF DIRECTOR
KATHRYN O'L. HIGGINS, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND
HUMAN RESOURCES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 10, 1986

Malden, Massachusetts 02148

Dear

Thank you for your letter in reference to S. 288, The Federal Food Irradiation and Control Act of 1985. As you know, this bill would provide for further developments of commercialization of food irradiation through the establishment of a Joint Operations Committee for Food Irradiation in the Department of Agriculture.

Clearly there are medical questions that have not been answered regarding the irradiation of food. I am currently studying this issue, and I assure you that I will keep your concerns in mind should this bill come before the full Senate.

Sincerely,

Edward M. Kennedy

Edward M. Kennedy

16 84

students decided to file a bill to establish a Statue of Liberty Awareness Day. The bill was worded so that it would result in a proclamation. (This means that, by law, a new copy of the wording must be printed and signed by the governor each year. The original is then filed in the state's archives. Anyone wanting a copy of the proclamation simply has to request it, but it is not sent automatically to anyone.) After one of their local state representatives agreed to sponsor the bill, it began its legislative life in January 1984. In the course of developing their petition, Hayner's students wrote group letters to the principals and students of many neighboring elementary schools to recruit support for their bill—perhaps 500 to 1000 altogether, according to Hayner. While the bill was going through the legislative process, the students also prepared and gave testimony at the State House. Signed into law by the governor on June 14, 1984, the act designates October 26 each year as Statue of Liberty Awareness Day. Each year from now on the Governor of Massachusetts will sign a proclamation "recommending that such day be observed by all public elementary school students in an appropriate manner."[8]

At the initiative of the class itself, another project to learn how a bill becomes law was undertaken in 1973 by a second-grade teacher, Palma Johnson, with her class in the public school of Franklin, Massachusetts Public Schools.[9] The class had read an article in their *Weekly Reader* telling how a bill had been passed in the state of Maryland designating the butterfly as the state insect. They asked if they could develop a similar bill if Massachusetts had no official state insect. After writing to public officials at the State House in Boston and finding out that the state had none, her students researched possibilities and voted to select the ladybug. With the sponsorship of their local representative, to whom they wrote for help, they filed a petition in 1973 to designate the ladybug as the official insect of Massachusetts. During its legislative hearings, the students prepared and gave testimony at the State House. The bill became law in 1974. A thirteen-page booklet, entitled "The Ladybug Story," was written with illustrations and published by the Office of the Secretary of State, Division of Tours and Government Education, and is available at the State House in Boston to show elementary school students how a bill becomes a law.

In 1985, Jay Sugerman, a fourth-grade teacher in Brookline, Massachusetts, suggested that his class file a bill with their state legislator to designate the corn muffin as the official muffin of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to learn how a bill becomes law.[10] In a unit of study on the Pilgrims, his students had learned how valuable corn was to the early settlers of Massachusetts. They decided that this might be a way to honor the memory of both the Pilgrims and the native Americans who had introduced them to corn.

Figure 8 shows the letter one student sent to the State House in support of the bill, as it went through the legislative process in the winter of 1986. The bill was signed into law by the governor in May 1986.

FIGURE 8
Letter To The State House

Kate Losch
4th Grade Runkle School

Hi, I'm Kate Lorch, age 9, and a relative of English settlers who came to Holliston, Mass. in 1632, twelve years after the Mayflower.

My great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather, Henry Lealand, would be proud to know how our class hopes to honor corn and the part it played in the relationship between the native Americans and the settlers. The native Americans gave the settlers corn and taught them how to grow it and use it for food, like muffin's. I hope you will pass this bill in memory of the native Americans and the settlers. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Kate Lorch

Perhaps the most spectacular example of a project to designate a state symbol was the officially-sponsored State Animal Project, devised by Jim Waltermire, Secretary of State in Montana. This project was designed to introduce all students in the state to both its electoral process and its legislative process.[11] Part of the background for this mammoth undertaking was concern about the fact that 18- to 25-year-olds have the poorest record for voter turn-out in the country. Almost 450 schools chose to participate in the project, which began in August 1982, under the direction of Jean Johnson, Director of Special Projects for the Secretary of State. The campaign to name a state animal culminated first in a real primary election in September; this election narrowed the choices to two animals, the grizzly bear and the elk. Students then participated again in a real election in their own schools on election day in November 1982 to determine a winner. In this way, student voting parallelled the voting done by adults at both elections. A bill was then filed in the legislature to make the winning animal, the grizzly bear, the state animal. The bill proceeded through the State House and Senate and was signed into law by the governor on April 7, 1983.

About 55,000 students, one-third of all Montana's student population, participated in the state animal election. Each participating school held nominating

conventions, and students wrote slogans, songs, speeches, and letters to legislators. Students also conducted their own elections and learned about voter registration, poll books, the secret ballot, ballot rotation, and the rules regarding electioneering near polling places. As the bill went through the legislative process, selected students from a number of schools gave oral testimony at the bill's hearings. All students in the state, however, were encouraged to mail in written testimony; they were given suggestions about how to write up their testimony and were told that it would become part of the state's permanent records. In addition, posters and campaign materials created by students were exhibited in the State Capitol Building. Because the elections for a state animal were read, and because the bill incorporating the winning animal became law, all the writing the students did throughout the duration of this vast project constituted genuine civic writing.

It should be noted that Secretary of State Jim Waltermire's office has developed a new set of materials, entitled "The Initiative Process: A Lesson in Citizen Participation for Montana Students," that teachers can use year after year.[12] This Student Initiative Program shows students how to bypass the legislative process and enact laws—or even change the State Constitution directly. According to David Schmidt, editor of the *Initiative News Report*, this curriculum appears to be the "first curriculum material in the nation specifically designed to educate future voters about their initiative and referendum voting rights."[13] This project depends completely upon teachers' willingness to undertake the development of a petition and the class's ability to come up with a "problem that needs correcting or an area where a new law would benefit their school, community, or Montana."[14]

Teachers who have helped their students develop and follow a bill through the legislative process in order for them to learn how a bill becomes a law are to be commended. However, student-initiated bills introduced into a state legislature consume a great deal of time on the part of many people—teachers, legislators, and their aides. A conscientious legislator, especially, will make sure that students in his or her district gain the most they can from the experience, for both the students' and their parents' sake.[15] For that reason alone, student-initiated bills involving the state government should be worthy of everyone's time and efforts. The bills that students introduce into the state legislature may have symbolic value only, as did the two proclamations on wearing seat belts for safety that Ann Hoyle's students submitted to their public officials. However, they should be about a public policy issue, such as her students' proclamations were. Moreover, they should be reserved for high school students only, because older students will benefit the most from the experience. The bills for proclamations or resolutions that high school students could develop might concern issues that particularly involve them, such as drunken driving, alcohol and drug abuse, vandalism, or teenage pregnancy.[16] Further, projects involving the state legislature might best be co-sponsored by a state department of education and the Secretary of State's office. A sponsored project on a state-wide basis, like the one initiated by the Secretary of State in Montana, would offer all students in the state an opportunity to participate and would also provide resources to individual teachers.[17] Finally, such a project should be undertaken perhaps no more than once every three or four years. In that way, each student could have an opportunity to participate once before graduation, but the legislature would not have more than one project every four years to deal with. In the course of such a project, high school students could learn how to register and vote, who their state officials are, and how their state legislature works. Because most students have almost no experience with our legislative process before they graduate from high school, a state-wide project for high school students may serve a useful role if students have a serious issue to discuss and their views are considered seriously.

The local community may be the most appropriate arena for individual classroom projects of this nature. Individual teachers at any level of education who want their students to learn how laws are made might help their students learn how to write a petition for the warrant at Town Meeting or for the docket at a city council or county commissioners' meeting. Students would then learn that they often need to secure signatures from registered voters for a petition in their local community. They would also learn the procedures for securing them. Petitions for local government bodies should also deal with public policy issues. These issues could be similar to those mentioned for state-wide projects or they might concern local environment problems.

There is, of course, no reason why the subject of a bill students develop could not be controversial. Controversy might even be desirable. Students could then learn two fundamental lessons about the democratic process from their experience. One is that orderly controversy or conflict over public policy is of utmost value in a constitutional democracy. Discussion of a controversial issue is the way in which all sides of an issue are brought to the fore and all interest groups revealed. They could then understand why open debate on political issues, rather than universal suffrage, more clearly distinguishes democratic from non-democratic countries. In the U.S.S.R., for example, there is universal suffrage, but there is no genuine political choice among competing political parties. Students could also learn that controversy in a constitutional democracy is handled in non-violent ways and by agreed-upon rules of procedure. If genuine controversy develops, then learn-

FIGURE 9

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE HOUSE • BOSTON 02133

MICHAEL S. DUKAKIS
GOVERNOR

February 27, 1985

Dear Superintendent:

The principals of your elementary and middle schools will be receiving information and materials pertinent to a special, short-term project called "KIDSWRITES."

"KIDSWRITES" has been developed by the Massachusetts Envelope Company which has a long history of civic involvement. This project calls upon students in grades four through six to compose a letter to me on an environmental issue of concern to them. This would provide them with an excellent opportunity to apply their writing skills in a real life situation, while participating in the democratic process.

I hope that this worthwhile project, which concludes April 12, 1985 receives the support of your staff, and can be implemented into your curriculum.

The involvement of the Massachusetts Envelope Company in this project is appreciated, and I offer my full support. I am looking forward to learning about the concerns our children have regarding the Commonwealth's environment, and sharing their concerns with my Secretary of Environmental Affairs, James Hoyte.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL S. DUKAKIS

MSD/jc

ing how a bill becomes law would be a genuine political learning experience.

To Identify a Problem and Propose a Solution. Teachers may also ask students to identify a civic or political problem and to write a persuasive letter proposing a solution to the problem for appropriate public officials. Three examples illustrate this purpose for writing.

A project devised and sponsored by the Massachusetts Envelope Company in cooperation with the governor and the Massachusetts State Department of Education in the spring of 1985 illustrates this purpose for writing. In this project, students in grades four through six were invited to compose a letter to the governor on an environmental issue of concern to them. They were directed to choose an environmental issue which they felt strongly about, and to present their ideas in a concise and well-organized letter. They were asked to state why they felt the problem was an important issue and how they thought it might be solved.

Explanatory letters were sent over the governor's signature to every superintendent of schools in the state (see Figure 9 on page 19), and all principals of elementary and middle schools received the materials needed for teachers to participate in the project. The project generated a great deal of enthusiasm, and over 1300 teachers in the state chose to participate. Many teachers chose to expand relevant units of science study to help their students acquire a better information base for their writing. According to the rules for this project, each class selected the best letter to send to the governor's office. All these letters were rated in a holistic scoring session, and writers of the 24 highest-rated letters were given an award by the governor at the State House.

Figure 10 shows an award-winning letter written by a fifth grader, advocating a wildlife sanctuary for bald eagles in the state.

FIGURE 10

Honorable Michael S. Dukakis
Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Room 360
Boston, Massachusetts 02133
Dear Governor Dukakis:

I am writing to you because I am concerned about the possible extinction of our National Bird, the American Bald Eagle.

In 1882 Congress chose the Bald Eagle to be the main figure of our National Seal. It symbolized the bold free spirit of our new country. Today it still represents the natural beauty, strength, and freedom of America.

The Bald Eagle is disappearing because we have not treated him very well. In the past, people have harmed and killed it. Our civilization has destroyed most of the wild natural areas where it used to live. We have destroyed most of these areas by building on them and then polluting the land, water, and air with our wastes and noises. The greatest problem the eagle has faced though, is the effect of hard pesticides on its life cycle. When hard pesticides like DDT contaminate the eagle's natural food supply, they cannot give birth to healthy eaglets. In 1960 Massachusetts banned the use of hard pesticides. These laws have only helped the eagles a little. These birds need undisturbed areas in order to live. They need tall forests, clear skies, fresh water, and an abundance of wildlife to survive and multiply.

Last fall, the Massachusetts Audobon Society started a project at the Quabbin Reservoir to bring the Bald Eagle back to Massachusetts. They have brought four eaglets from the province of Manitoba in Canada to live, grow, and reproduce in this ideal habitat. It will be four more years before these eaglets are full gown and are able to mate. If this event takes place, it will show that the eagles have adopted this area as home, and the Bald Eagle will be successfully reintroduced to Massachusetts.

Wouldn't it be an honor, Governor Dukakis, if Massachusetts could play an important role in saving our National Bird? I urge you to please give this project your full attention and support in keeping the Quabbin Reservoir a wildlife sanctuary for future years.

Yours truly,

Another example in which students were asked to identify a civic problem and to propose a solution for it occurred as part of an assessment of writing in the elementary grades.[18] For the assessment, fifth-grade students in Naperville, Illinois were asked to write a letter to the Mayor of Naperville telling her one thing that should be changed in Naperville, and explaining how the change might be brought about and how the city would be improved by it. A sampling of the letters the students wrote was sent to the mayor, who replied to each of the children whose letters she received. (The mayor was told that she was receiving first drafts and that the children were not given an opportunity for corrections.) The two letters reproduced in Figure 11 indicate the useful ideas the assignment elicited from these two children.

FIGURE 11
Letters To The Mayor of Naperville, Illinois

1329 S. Independence Blvd.
Naperville, IL 60540
October 3, 1983

The Honorable Margaret P. Price
Mayor of the City of Naperville
175 W. Jackson Avenue
Naperville, IL 60566

Dear Mrs. Price:

I think you should start a bus route going into downtown Naperville. It could have a small fare, and people wouldn't have to worry about parking.

The buses would go out to the edge of Naperville. You could make the stop by [sic] the stores.

With this system, the stores would have better business, and it will save energy. Also the public would like the convince [sic]. Please think about it.

1329 S. Independence Blvd.
Naperville, IL 60540

October 3, 1983

The Honorable Margaret P. Price
Mayor of the City of Naperville
175 W. Jackson Avenue
Naperville, IL 60566

Dear Mrs. Price:

I think Naperville should have bike trails on main roads and through woods. The bike trails should be three miles long and go through different neighborhoods. Make the bike trails go through parks and down by rivers. I think [you] should have a bike rental. The change will give people lots of exercise and scenery.

In a different project, fifth-grade students identified a common concern and coordinated their writing activities to achieve visible results. For a planned composition lesson on persuasive writing, Jo-Ann Smith, a teacher in the public schools of Naperville, Illinois, asked her students to find an issue or problem that concerned them in order to write a persuasive letter to a public official. Her students decided to write about a shared problem—a broken sidewalk outside the school that needed repair.[19] The broken sidewalk could trip people as well as cause mishaps to bicyclists. The students gathered information about whom they might write to and then wrote individual letters. Some went to the local newspaper, some to the mayor, some to the Home and School Association, and some to the City Council. The City Council officially rejected the students' request the first year, but, the following year, funds for the repair were approved. By choosing to target one problem for solution, the students were able to learn how many different officials, agencies, or institutions had to be contacted in order to solve a civic problem. They also discovered that similar content had to be shaped differently for different audiences.

Even young students can identify civic problems and propose thoughtful solutions. Adults frequently write to their public officials with proposals for addressing problems they have personally identified. The value of this kind of writing is obvious. It gives students an opportunity to learn that the average citizen has both a right and a responsibility to offer ideas on problems they think they have discovered and think require attention. Many public officials even welcome letters from their constituents suggesting how a problem they were unaware of might be resolved.

To Influence Attitudes about Identified Social or Political Issues. Teachers may also ask students to write a persuasive letter to appropriate officials on identified issues that are not related directly to a proposed law or decision. Four examples illustrate this purpose for writing.

In the following example, grade seven students in the Rutherford County Public Schools, North Carolina, were asked to use information they had learned in their science class to develop a civic-minded letter to a business executive on a local (and national) ecological issue.[20] The purpose of the composition lesson was to give students an opportunity to shape a body of scientific knowledge for an audience beyond the classroom. The class had been studying units on ecology and endangered species. Their state was the location of many forests that served as habitats for the bald eagle, and these habitats were often destroyed when trees were cut down for lumber. The students were asked to write to the president of a local lumber company to express their concerns about what might be happening to the habitats of the bald eagle and to make the executive aware of the problem. The letters were not intended to be accusatory since the policies or practices of the company were not known. Figure 12 shows the second draft of a letter by one student.

FIGURE 12

Grade 7
Rutherford County Public Schools
North Carolina

Dear Sir,

I want to let you know that your company is endangering the bald eagle. You might think it is surprising but when you cut down trees most of them are an eagle's home. Also when the trees fall they can destroy other animals' homes and other animals' lives. I wanted to let you know because I care about endangered animals. I hope you care too and will do something about it.

Other examples of animals that are endangered or extinct are the buffalo, passenger pigeon, mule deer, seal, and of course the bald eagle.

We have done a lot to prevent extinction but sometimes we are too late. Some of the things we have done

are we made laws to prevent hunting these animals, we have made sanctuaries and planted trees. We have also stopped the use of DDT. We have done a lot but you can help by planting trees and be more careful about forest fires.

We want to save the bald eagle because it is our national symbol and it represents our freedom. Also it can help us by killing rodents and snakes.

Thank you

In the next example, students wrote letters to the editor of their local newspaper in response to an article about a general social issue that might affect them in the future. Alice Feeney, an eighth grade English teacher in Naperville, Illinois, brought an article in the January 4, 1985, issue of the Naperville *Sun* entitled "Employers Place Too Much Emphasis on Grades" to students' attention.[21] The class was doing a unit on business letters, and she wanted them to know that, among the many reasons for writing formal letters, expressing their opinions and feelings on current issues in a letter to the editor was a very important reason for writing a formal letter.[22] She also wanted them to know that they had "a right and an obligation" to send such letters. After a lengthy discussion of the article, she asked them to write their reactions to the editor of "Student Voices," a column in the local newspaper for student opinion. Students were encouraged to express different points of view. The January 23, 1985, issue of the newspaper printed letters from students who agreed with the writer of the article (Figure 13).

The February 13, 1985, issue of the newspaper (Figure 14) printed letters from several students who disagreed with the writer. Almost all of the students' letters were thoughtful, informative, and well-argued, suggesting the seriousness with which these students approached the assignment.

FIGURE 13

Letter To The Editor,
Naperville *Sun*, January 23, 1985

Editor's Note. An article in the Friday, Jan. 4, issue of the Naperville *Sun* quoted a Northwestern University professor as saying "Shortsighted employers increasingly are placing too much emphasis on grades when they hire young people for entry-level jobs, therefore overlooking many good applicants."

Lincoln Junior High eighth graders, students of Alice Feeney—for the most part—"totally agreed" with Professor Victor R. Lindquist's contention, and made the following comments on the subject.

I agree with every single word you state in the article. If you are truly an expert as a mechanic and your grades are low, the employer and you miss out. I hope things change over the years so I don't worry about this problem.

I thank you for printing this superior article. I encourage you to write more on the subject.

Bill Knierim

I agree with the person who wrote this well-meaning article. As a student, I also feel too much pressure is put on us to get good grades. Employers should look at our extra efforts in school, such as student government, which takes a lot of responsibilty.

I am glad you printed the article, and I hope employers will think before they turn someone down.

Jennifer Holmes

I agree with the article on what it said. I believe that employers should give them a chance at the job because grades aren't everything. If grades were so important than only people with good grades would get hired and that means more unemployment for all.

I think this was a good article to print. I wish that more employers will give kids a chance before they look closely at their grades.

Tera Noble

I agree totally with your article. Employers shouldn't just look at grades, but their extracurricular activities. I think grades are just a way to see how well you take a test. Some people are just bad test takers because they freeze up. I understand some people work hard for their good grades, but so do some people with bad test results. Grades do not measure motivation or determination.

Thank you for writing such a good article. I hope employers change their ways on this subject in the future.

Noelle Swenson

I totally agree with the article, but I would like to focus your attention to one paragraph about motivation. Lindquist, in my opinion, is absolutely right. Grades do not measure motivation. I think involvement in extracurricular activities and how well you work with people measures motivation.

This was a great article and I hope in the future employers will be more fair.

Wynne Bickhaus

FIGURE 14

Letter to the Editor,
Naperville *Sun*, February 13, 1985

Editor's Note. Although a majority of students agreed with a Northwestern University professor who was

quoted in the Naperville *Sun* as saying that prospective employers overemphasized grades when they considered young people for employment, there were a number of eighth graders at Lincoln who disagreed.

I disagree with the expert's opinion on the matter. In my opinion, a student with good grades should be taken more into consideration for a job than an average-to-poor student. The fact that a student makes good grades does show motivation. A good student generally turns out to be a hard worker with much motivation, therefore being a good employee.

Employers should also take into consideration whether or not the student participated in extracurricular activities because this shows commitment. A committed employee will try his or her best to work hard and will be well motivated.

I disagree with most of what the expert said, but I do hope that employers will take certain other criteria into consideration.

Katie Jones

I totally and completely disagree with everything in this article. The expert, Victor R. Lindquist, says that grades don't measure motivation, discipline, social skills and interaction. Mr. Lindquist is wrong. People will always do what they want to do no matter what. Whether it be making excellent grades, making varsity in a sport, or even breaking the law, there is something inside everyone to do just that, and that is called motivation. High grades tell the employer that that person can communicate, have self-discipline and be a self-starter in anything that person can do. Mr. Lindquist also said that grades measure a person's ability to take tests. There are many people in any school who will agree that a person can make high marks, but score low on tests because of nervousness, apprehension, etc. This is the reason why employers are so critical of who they hire.

Ted Bush

I am not a total A student so it might be kind of hard for me to get a job. They should look at extracurricular classes, not at academic classes as much.

Bob Wershing

In another example, a student at Thayer Academy in Braintree, Massachusetts, decided to write a letter to the editor (Figure 15) focusing on the process which the school had used to help its students understand all the aspects of a complex and highly controversial international issue—the divesting of stock in business firms dealing with South Africa. The letter was sent to both The Boston *Globe* and a local newspaper.[23] Encouraged by the faculty of her school to send the letter, the writer wanted the public to know how much she had benefited from a balanced discussion of the issue of divestiture, in contrast to the way in which the issue was being approached in many schools and colleges. The letter is refreshing, because it is unusual for students to comment thoughtfully on how they think their teachers or schools have helped them to understand the complexities of a major issue. Its content may suggest to other teachers how many highly divisive issues may be presented to their students.

FIGURE 15

Letter to the Editor,
Boston *Globe*, May 26, 1986

As a Thayer Academy student, I am convinced that our approach to the question of divestiture in South Africa is more mature and productive than that of many colleges and their students. We became aware that the question concerned Thayer because of an article in our student newspaper, Tiger's Eye. The article discussed the pros and cons with genuine concern.

As a result, a committee of three students, three teachers, and three trustees was formed. After discussing the issue with our headmaster, a special chapel program was arranged with two South Africans, experts on the question, as speakers. They debated the issue, and the committee, acting as a panel, questioned many aspects of this complex problem.

The program raised numerous questions in my mind and left me undecided on whether companies should divest. But, most importantly, it really made me think about the whole issue instead of making a rash decision.

Oppression of any race by another is wrong. This is a tricky moral decision, because while apartheid is wrong, divestment may not be the best solution. I haven't decided, nor has the committee. When it decides, it will make its recommendation to the board of trustees, who will make the final decision.

Discussion is an option for angry students. The divestment issue has torn apart the Dartmouth campus rather than bringing about concened deliberation. I realize that Dartmouth's situation is very different—for one thing, the amount of money invested is far greater. But I think there could have been a better approach to take so that students could have come together to voice their opinions.

Susan Dever
Thayer Academy, '87
Braintree

In a final example, we see how students at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh are required to express what they have learned about recent

social and political issues in a piece of argumentative writing to public officials or a newspaper.[24] According to Professor George Pasti, Jr., the course, entitled *The World Since 1960*, usually has an enrollment of about 200. Because of its size, the examinations are primarily objective. However to supplement these examinations, students are required to write a letter to (1) the editor of the *New York Times* (the class is required to read the *New York Times* for the course), (2) their representative in Congress, and (3) the President. Students are instructed to write each letter in three paragraphs: in the first, an opinion is to be expressed; in the second, evidence from lectures and the *Times* is to be cited; and in the third, there is to be a persuasive conclusion. Professor Pasti mails the letters he believes are very good.

Even though the kind of writing illustrated in this section usually has no immediately visible political consequences, it nevertheless has many values. In a pragmatic sense, this writing informs its readers that there are people in their community, however unknown and unseen they may be, to whom these issues very much matter. Thus, this writing can be said to have a political effect on the reader. In a psychological sense, this writing gives the writer an identity as an individual with a unique voice in a civic community. It not only serves to establish the writer's presence and identity in the reader's mind, it also contributes to the development of the writer's perception of himself or herself as a member of a civic community. This holds as well for letters to legislators or editors about proposed laws, political decisions and problems the writer has identified. Thus, the writing that students may do about social or political issues, whether or not they are related directly to specific legislative or administrative decisions, has unmeasurable but profound civic value, however subtle it may be. Explicitly, of course, students will, or should, learn from doing this kind of writing that the views of ordinary citizens on public issues do matter in a democracy. They may discover that an emotionally strong but thoughtful expression of their ideas about an identified issue, or one they have discovered, can provide useful information to others, if not persuade them to a particular point of view.

CHAPTER 4
CREATING CONTEXTS AND PURPOSES FOR CIVIC WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM: OTHER KINDS OF CIVIC WRITING

Most teachers seem to think of civic discourse as primarily persuasive discourse of one kind or another. This view was embodied in the traditional teaching of rhetoric, which dealt with public oratory for civic purposes, and it continues to influence our conception of the nature of civic discourse. Yet, there are other purposes for civic writing that are much less hortatory, even non-hortatory, in nature. They reflect the third theory discussed in Chapter 1 and stress a collaborative mode of civic participation. A collaborative mode means working in a cooperative way with public officials or fellow citizens, usually towards shared civic goals. This mode contrasts with advocating a particular course of action or point of view representing a special interest that may be opposed by some public officials or particular groups of citizens. In general, a collaborative mode reflects a spirit of concern for others. This chapter includes discussion and examples of purposes for civic writing that are motivated by a spirit of collaboration. These purposes for writing often pertain to local government; because local government is more accessible to students than state or national government, and provides more opportunities for direct involvement than the others do.

To Provide Information. Teachers may ask their students to provide useful information to local officials or citizens by undertaking research projects on a matter that might be of interest or concern to them. In the following example, a junior high school teacher, as part of a course on American government in public schools in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, had a ninth-grade class of academically low students collect information over the course of the school year about the local effects of acid rain.[1] The purpose of the project was solely information-sharing; students were to present the information at the end of the year to the boards of selectmen of the communities the school serves. Deborah McKinstry was able to arouse her students' interest in acid rain, a subject she was personally interested in, because many of them fish in local streams and work in local apple orchards. Articles or information on the acid content of lakes and streams in Worcester County had already appeared in local newspapers, suggesting possible problems with the supply of fish in these lakes and streams. Students undertook the gathering of as much information as they could. They wrote letters to the Library of Congress, their congressional and state representatives, the Audobon Society, and power companies, as well as other sources of information. They talked to local fishermen about the trout count and to local apple orchard owners to see if production had declined. They also made a trip to the Quabbin Reservoir, a major state reservoir, and spoke to public officials there about the acid content of the reservoir. With litmus paper supplied by a science teacher in the school, they then tested some small lakes and streams in their local communities for its acid content, comparing the results of these tests with results obtained from tests on other substances like vinegar. The culmination of the project was a graphic display summarizing and synthesizing all the information they found.[2] Mrs. McKinstry noted that her students willingly wrote letters to gather information, even when they knew they were duplicating each other's requests, because they so much wanted to receive a response of their own.

In an even more extensive project that was part of a college course, a teacher had his students do intensive research in their local community as their major writing assignment in the course. According to his description of the project in a professional journal,[3] Richard Bullock assigned his students in three business writing courses a feasibility study: they were to determine through whatever research they needed to do how to turn Athens, Ohio, into an art-centered showplace to help revitalize the area's economy. Their work, the instructor promised, would be presented to appropriate public officials. The students had to coordinate their activities, but each was responsible for an individual component of the study. In the course of the project, the students learned, among other things, how to conduct an interview and where to look for certain types of information. They also learned how many institutions or agencies would need to be involved in implementing a major civic project. Bullock reports that he ended up with sixty different and interesting final reports, which were presented to the city and county legislative and planning offices.

In the following example, students did research for a local organization in cooperation with a teacher in the school. Two ninth-grade high school students researched and wrote up a twenty-five year profile of the Brookline Board of Selectmen for a study of the executive branch of local government undertaken by the League of Women Voters of Brookline. Their research was supervised by a member of the social studies department at the high school and the chairperson of the study committee for the League. Although the students received payment for their work from the League (and thus the work was not unpaid voluntary research), their

report was included in a presentation of the information to interested citizens in the community. One of the students wrote the following evaluation of the usefulness of the project to her:[4]

> The project gave me more background on how to organize a research project. This skill will be very helpful to me in future assignments.
>
> A very interesting part of the research we did was looking through back issues of the Brookline Chronicle Citizen. I learned a lot about Brookline's history in a way far more interesting than reading a textbook. From looking at the newspapers, I learned about the different campaign styles people use. I noticed that the winners all shared a common tactic in their campaigns. They all projected a lot of confidence and they had the community work to qualify them for the job of selectman.
>
> While looking for liquor licenses in the Selectmen's minutes books, I learned the different types of liquor licenses available. From the minutes I also learned about how the town is organized and the way ordinances are passed. . . .

As this evaluation suggests, and as Richard Bullock suggested, students usually learn far more than one can anticipate from such projects. They also learn sources for information that they might otherwise never know about.

More students should have opportunities to investigate community needs or concerns and to synthesize and present their information to public officials. Students may gain much useful knowledge about their community through their research, especially if they participate in a coordinated group project. A class project may lend itself to more productive work by the students (and easier management by the teacher) than a large number of completely unrelated individual projects do.

Topics for class research projects might come from local community organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, local historical societies, local environmental groups, local Leagues of Women Voters, etc., or they might come from local officials. As Richard Bullock suggested, many public officials might even welcome research by highly capable students on ideas these officials would like to explore but have no funds to investigate. Topics may also come from the teacher's interests, as the topic of acid rain did, if student interests legitimately match teacher interests. These projects might be undertaken as interdisciplinary projects if they have strong scientific or historical components.

Class research projects might also provide useful information to voting residents of a community. The kind of voter's guide published by a local League of Women Voters might be done in part by high school students in cooperation with a local League of Women Voters. Students could gather all the necessary information from each candidate for major local offices by means of interviews at the school. In communities where no voter's guide is prepared for all households or residents, an informational sheet prepared and distributed by high school students to parents and neighbors could be a well-appreciated service. By helping to prepare a voter's guide, students might learn a great deal not only about potential and actual local officials but also about local offices themselves—the services they provide and whether they depend on citizen volunteers.

Another way student could learn much about local issues and provide useful information to their communities is by attending one or two meetings of their local citizen boards or advisory committees and writing summaries of what happened. (Many chapters of the League of Women Voters have Observer Corps that do exactly this, and their summaries are published in their monthly newsletter to members.) Students could go in pairs and be assigned to cover the meeting of a particular board, commission, or committee. Their summaries could be compared and discussed in class, and the best one might be chosen to appear in the school newspaper, or in a column for student reporters in the local newspaper. (Few local newspapers have enough reporters to cover all the meetings that occur each week in a community.) How students perceive the work their local citizen groups do would be as informative to adults in their communities as it would be to the students themselves. Moreover, students would be able to learn about the nature and the problems of self-government in a direct, concrete way.

One class of senior high school students could also be responsible for conducting a voter registration drive in their school each year. Students could write letters notifying other seniors about how to register for voting. As students reach their eighteenth birthdays, follow-up or reminder letters could also be sent. This particular civic project is an important one for a high school to consider, as students need to accept the responsibility for registering to vote.

In sum, teachers can stimulate a great deal of civic writing by developing projects in which students provide useful information on civic matters to their peers as well as to their public officials or other residents of the local communities. In addition to acquiring specific knowledge about their communities and about the dynamics of self-government, students might also learn how information is needed in making judgments about political candidates or public policies.

To Evaluate a Public Program or Activity. Students may also write an evaluation, for an appropriate official, of an educational program or activity in which they have participated. As the following examples suggest, students can make judgments about their experiences beginning in the elementary grades. Shirley Brusco, a first-grade teacher in the public schools of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has, for 25 years, asked her students to

write an evaluation of the first-grade program after she gives out report cards on the last day of school.[5] She asks them to tell her what they liked and did not like about first grade. She urges them to be honest and not worry about her feelings, because the information will help her to improve her teaching. Figure 16 shows evaluations she received in June, 1986.

FIGURE 16

Letters To a Grade One Teacher

June 5, 1986

Dear Miss Brusco,

I do like some of the papers. But some times you give us too much work. But you are the nicest teacher.

June 5, 1986

Dear Miss Brusco,

I think SRA is too hard. You should leave out Extra Credit. It is fun. Math is fun too. Phonics is not very much fun. I like spelling a little.

Following a visit to the Fraunces Tavern Museum in New York City, the students in a grade four class in the New York City Public Schools were asked to write letters evaluating their experience as well as thanking the museum officials for the tour of the museum. Students were urged to indicate what they found most interesting and to suggest what might have made their visit better. For their efforts, they received the letter shown in Figure 17.[6] As Dale Zaklad, the education program coordinator, points out in her letter, it was the first time she had ever received an evaluation of her program from students who had visited the museum. It is worth noting that a simple thank-you note from the children would probably not have elicited a reply at all, not to mention such a lengthy one.

FIGURE 17

December 22, 1982

Class 4-301
P.S. 6
45 East 81st Street
New York, New York, 10028

Dear Class 4-301:

Thank you so much for your letters. We do receive many thank-you notes from other children who visit our Museum, but this is the first time I can remember receiving evaluations of our program.

I am pleased that you enjoyed our Tavern exhibition, and sad that you felt so unhappy because you missed seeing George Washington's hair and tooth. I wanted to write to you all, to explain something about museums, which might lessen your disappointment over missing out on the George Washington mementos. As you saw when you visited our site, we have a great many paintings, prints and objects to show to the public, and very little space in which to display them. Therefore, we change the objects which are in our cases, every so often, and we change the exhibitions in our main galleries once, or even twice each school year.

This year, as you know, we are focusing on Tavern Life in Colonial America. Because we wanted to fill our exhibition cases with prints, paintings and objects which are related to this theme, we had to put away many other things which had been on display in years past. Last year we centered our education programs around George Washington, since it was the 250th anniversary of his birth. Therefore, our exhibition cases were filled with his letters, prints and paintings which related to his life, and objects such as his hair and a piece of his tooth.

I hope you will return to our museum in the future. Perhaps you can see the objects you missed at another time.

Very truly yours,
Dale Zaklad
Education Program Coordinator
Fraunces Tavern Museum

In another example, students were asked to evaluate their experiences in a high school Chapter One program.[7] Figure 18 shows one student's evaluation. This student's evaluation of the meaningfulness of the program to her gives worthwhile information to both administrators and parents. She clearly appreciates small, quiet classes and the individual attention her teacher can give her. Note that having a student evaluate a program, not a teacher, makes possible mention of a feature such as class size.

FIGURE 18
Letter On A High School Chapter One Program

How Chapter One Has Helped Me

Chapter One has helped me in many ways. Such as my teacher has giving [*sic*] me individual attention. In Chapter I, I have been doing better work in Chapter I. I like Chapter I because my class is very small, so it can be easier to work with. My English class has good English and Reading books to use. I have better grades, than in a regular English class. It has made school more

fun. My teacher is funny to be around. The class is quiet, so I can consentrate [*sic*] on my work. That is why I know how Chapter I has helped me.

In a final example, students in a high school graduating class were asked to write an evaluation of their entire educational experience for their school committee. This writing assignment occurred in a public school in Dedham, Massachusetts in 1985.[8] The students were asked, specifically, to comment on the strengths and weakness of their educational experiences and to make suggestions for improvement. All the letters were sent to the school committee and some to the local newspaper, which printed several as letters to the editor. Figure 19 is a copy of the evaluation one student wrote. As can be seen, this student's (highly positive) evaluation reveals her entire value system with respect to schooling and education.

FIGURE 19

Letter To The School Committee of Dedham, MA
To the School Committee:

It is difficult for a school to extend itself in such a way as to fulfill the intellectual needs of every student. This is not to be blamed on the system but rather on the lack of enthusiasm by many students. Homework and studying are usually done merely for the purpose of achieving good, or at least passing, grades rather than for the desire to broaden knowledge and range of abilities. Thus, the true purpose of education is only partially fulfilled.

It is my opinion that this problem is due to lenient course requirements and homework demands. If students are forced to pursue subjects, take a large number of courses and do homework more thoroughly, they may someday grow to respect education and realize its value. it is the responsibility of those who receive the service of education to embrace the opportunity, awareness and enlightenment which it exists to provide.

In summary, I would like to say that even when a small minority benefits from an education to the extent that I did, the school which they can attribute their personal success to is one to be highly esteemed. I sincerely hope that my continued educational experiences will be equally enriching.

Sincerely yours,

Assignments to write an evaluation of an educational program or service may help students become aware of their right—and their responsibility—as citizens to provide public (or private) officials and lay citizens with useful information about the quality of the services and programs these officials and citizens are providing. In return, students' perceptions and judgments of what others have or have not tried to do for them offer these officials and citizens useful insights into the inner workings of these programs and services. In particular, having graduating students write, for their school committee, an evaluation of the education they have received may cause them to reflect upon a number of important aspects of their school experiences; their courses, their teachers, their educational and career goals, and their achievement record. It may easily make them reflect on their own personal values as well. Evaluations can thus be an occasion for a great deal of stocktaking. And if some school committee members take the time to read through such evaluations carefully, they may gain invaluable information about their curriculum programs and the multitude of services and extracurricular activities schools ordinarily provide, as well as the values and aspirations of the students they serve.

Many students believe that an evaluation is simply a catalogue of complaints or negative points. Therefore, teachers may need to require their students to indicate the strengths as well as the weaknesses of whatever they are evaluating. They might also request that students make positive suggestions for their readers to think about in order to make their students think constructively as well as positively.

As a final point to consider, it may be unethical for a teacher or a program director to ask students to evaluate a program that is in jeopardy or to write in support of, or in opposition to, a controversial policy if the teacher or director has a personal stake in the program or the outcome of the policy. It is not wrong for students who wish to do so to write to an appropriate official about such a program or issue if the impulse to write and the content of what they write is their own, but the teacher should not, for obvious reasons, help them with their writing.

To Express Gratitude, Support, or Concern. People also write as citizens to give thanks to someone for something or to show support or concern for someone or something. In the first example, first-grade children wrote a thank-you note to a governor for signing into law a bill that was very meaningful to them. Barbara Merritt, a teacher in a public school in Granby, Massachusetts, took advantage of the news about the seat belt legislation that Governor Michael Dukakis had just signed into laws in early January, 1986 to initiate a class discussion of the subject that month.[9] Her students suggested writing to the governor about their satisfaction with the new law, because they had just learned how to write a thank-you note before the December vacation. Each child wrote a letter, some of

them requesting seat belts on school buses. Figure 20 shows copies of two children's letters. Figure 21 shows the individualized response the teacher and class received from Governor Dukakis' office. In her cover letter to the governor, Ms. Merritt apologized for her students' failure to write out the governor's whole name; they did know his name, she assured him, but "first grade paper is small and printing is large."

FIGURE 20
Letters to Governor Dukakis

Dear Governor,

We like the law. You should put them on buses too.

Bryan H. Love

Dear Governor,

I'm proud of the new law, the seat belt law. Buses and trains should have them too.

Love

Sarah Bontempo

In a second example, a second-grade class in a public school in St. Paul, Minnesota, at the suggestion of one of the students, wrote letters to both President Reagan and Colonel Khadafy after the United States dropped bombs in April 1986 on Libya's bases for terrorist activities.[10] The students, who are encouraged by their teacher, Jill Swanson, to write regularly to people in the news both for writing practice and as civics lessons, wrote these letters to ask if there could be "solutions other than violence" and to express approval or disapproval of what had happened. For their efforts, the students received a badly misspelled two-page letter from Colonel Khadafy violently attacking the President. The students did not think the letter was "nice," and Ms. Swanson used it to discuss "the difference between fact and opinion."

In a third example, elementary school children were encouraged to write welcome home letters to citizens released from captivity in another country.[11] When the United States citizens who had been captured and held as hostages in Iran were freed, Ellen Shatz, a teacher in the Bronx, New York, had her students watch the event on television in her classroom. Their discussion afterwards led her students to write cheerful, welcome-home letters to the former hostages. One student received a gracious reply from one of them, L. Bruce Laingen in the U.S. Department of State, which is reproduced in the article Mrs. Shatz wrote describing her writing activities with her students. Mrs. Shatz also had her class watch television after the attempted assassination of President Reagan in March 1981. Their discussion of this event led her students to write sympathy notes and send get-well wishes to the President. For their reward, her students received a thank-you note from his office. Mrs. Shatz tells in her article how much it meant to her students to make contact with such important and faraway figures.

In another example, elementary school students were encouraged to write to President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev of the Soviet Union about their hopes and concerns for the Summit Conference.[12] Susan Jones, a grade four/five teacher in Brookline, Massachusetts, sparked her children's interest in the Summit Conference by simply asking the class one day, at a time when the newspapers and television were filled with stories of the coming meeting, if they knew anything about the Summit Conference or who Mr. Gorbachev was. Finding that her students knew almost nothing about either one, she asked them to gather information—by talking to parents or neighbors or by looking at newspapers or reference materials. After they brought back their information, she had them share it, so they could see what had been gathered. Because the information was presented in their own words, much of it in disorganized form, she encouraged them to ask questions of each other and decide what else they needed to know to clarify vague or contradictory information. After the second round of information gathering, she made the following assignment: "If you could say one thing to the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union as they sit down together at the Summit Meeting, what would you tell them?" The students' replies were then sent off to the two leaders. To date, no replies from the two leaders have been received.

Expressions of sympathy, joy, gratitude, concern, and hope are all part of normal social intercourse. They also constitute legitimate purposes for civic writing. This kind of civic writing has several values. It helps students see that their social bonds go far beyond their own neighborhoods and span national boundaries; one welcomes home citizens who have been held hostage because they share one's country. It also shows them that the common expressions of feeling that they extend regularly to those they know personally can be extended just as appropriately to their public officials, no matter how lofty their status, and to other citizens as well. One may thank a governor or a legislator for a helpful law just as one might thank a teacher or a parent for a beneficial rule or decision; one may send a president a get-well note after he has been hurt, because he is a normal human being as well as the elected leader of the country. Finally, this kind of assignment teaches students that the courtesies we ex-

FIGURE 21

MICHAEL S. DUKAKIS
GOVERNOR

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE HOUSE • BOSTON 02133

January 22, 1986

Ms. Barbara A. Merritt and Students
First Grade, Room 6
West Street School
Granby, MA 01033

Dear Ms. Merritt and class:

Thank you for writing to me about the new seat belt law. I am pleased to know that you think it is a good idea and I hope that you will always wear your seat belt when you are riding in cars.

Some of you mentioned in your letter that you would like to have seat belts on your school buses too. I want you to know that I am working with your Senators and Representatives to study this idea, just as you are studying different subjects at school. It is very important for each of us to think about safety for ourselves and for everybody and I am happy to know that you like this new law.

Thank you for writing to me.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Dukakis

MSD/cab-c

press naturally to those we live with, work with, or play with may be, and should be, a part of civic life as well.[13]

To Obtain Information. Teachers may also ask students to write letters requesting information from their public officials. For example, the offices of their congressional representatives can give students information about federal programs, government documents, trips to Washington, D.C., and the purchase of American flags. Figures 22 and 23 show letters written by elementary and secondary students to Governor Michael Dukakis requesting information about the state of Massachusetts.

Writing to a public official for information and receiving a reply providing that information may do a great deal to enhance students' understanding of their public officials as their public servants. Students might then learn that they have a right guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution to ask their public officials for help and to receive a response. Practice in writing such letters may also help them learn how to write coherently and with sufficient information about their needs so that their readers can respond adequately to their requests. As many public officials point out,[14] citizens who write for services often fail to provide their readers with clear information about what exactly they want or what their problem is. Moreover, some citizens expect officials to do extensive research for them, instead of identifying a topic about which the official would be apt to have information.

From occasional opportunities to write for information, students may also learn to whom to write for specific information. Ruth Derfler, a teacher in the Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences, commented that most adults do not know to whom they should write for help or information on any occasion.[15] Thus, teachers should encourage their students to figure out to whom to write when information is needed for a class project or activity. Exercises that pose a variety of problem situations and ask students to try to find in a telephone directory the appropriate local or state agency or department for dealing with the problem may be useful.[16]

Students may also learn how to address appropriately the official to whom they are writing. In the letters in Figures 22 and 23, the student writers have used the full name and address of the governor for the inside address and the greeting, but in the letter by the fifth-grade student the governor was addressed inappropriately. Students who wish to find out what a public official's name is may easily obtain the information form the latest edition of the *World Almanac* or a book entitled *State Elective Officials and the Legislatures*.

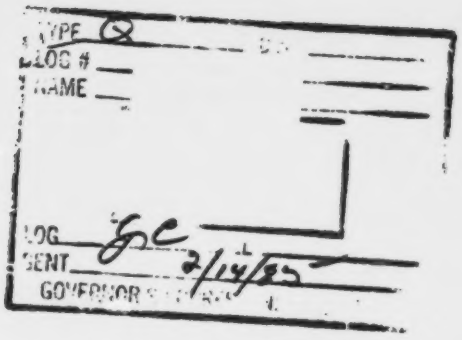
The letters were considered as model letters by the Director of the Governor's Correspondence Office because the writers explain clearly who they are, why they are writing, exactly what information they want, and what return address to use.[17] They also request appropriate or reasonable information from the governor and thank him in advance. (In addition, they used appropriate stationery and both wrote and printed their signatures.)

Concluding Remarks. As the examples in this chapter and in Chapter 3 suggest, teachers at all educational levels may help their students to engage as writers in the civic process for a number of different civic or political purposes. They may encourage their students to propose a law or to support or oppose an existing law or decision. They may ask them to identify civic problems and propose solutions to these problems or offer their views on current social or political issues that are unrelated to legislative activity. They may also ask their students to gather and present information that would be useful to others in their community, to evaluate educational programs and services from which they have benefited, to express their feelings about political events to their public officials or other citizens, or to ask for information or help from their public officials. All these are civic or political purposes for which adults frequently write as well.

If teachers can provide students with occasional opportunities to write for these civic or political purposes, they may achieve several worthy ends. First, their students will better understand the pragmatic intent of this kind of writing; unlike academic or literary writing, it is designed to be of specific use to the reader(s), whether it urges action on a matter or offers information. Intellectually, their students will also gain much concrete civic or political knowledge. By writingto a state representative or governor about a piece of legislation, students will learn that they have a state representative or a governor. They will also learn who that representative or governor is, where he or she is located, what at least one piece of legislation is, and something about how that legislation gets passed or defeated. And because this writing it a real part of the civic process—the activities citizens engage in to arrive at political decisions—it will give them meaningful civic experience.

However, the effect civic writing has on the students' perceptions of themselves as writers and as citizens may be its most significant value. A sense of civic worth may develop through their reactions to responses from their readers. What does it mean to see one's ideas published in a local newspaper or to receive a response to one's own writing from the President of the United States, a governor of a state, a mayor or board of selectmen, or a national or state senator or representative, as well as from other officials or citizens? For example, we can only imagine how a nine-year-old child might feel as a writer and as a citizen after

FIGURE 22



Chattanooga, Tennessee 37421
February 5, 1985

Governor Michael S. Dukakis
Statehouse
Boston, Massachusettes 02133

Dear Governor Dukakis,

I am a fifth grade student at The in Chattanooga, Tennessee. My Social Studies class is studying the United States of America. I have chosen to concentrate my studies on the state of Massachusettes. Could you please send me any information on the state's history, prominent citizens, seal, bird, flower, or any other pertinent facts which would be interesting to my fellow students.

I will be assembling the information in booklet form with a poster showing a drawing of your state, pointing out the major cities and waterways. These will be displayed for my classmates and any visitors to look at and study in their free time. Also, I will be making a written report for my teacher.

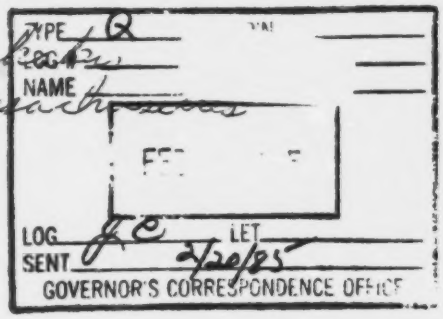
Thank you so much for any assistance you are able to give me.

Sincerely,

P.S. My mother thought you were great on "Saint Elsewhere."

FIGURE 23

Omaha, Nebraska 68106
February 6, 1985



The Honorable Michael S. Dukakis
Governor of the State of Massachusetts
State Capitol Building
Boston, MA 02109

Dear Governor Dukakis,

My name is . I am from Omaha's South High School. In my World Geography course, I am reporting on your state, Massachusetts.

I am writing to request information about the industry, schools and recreation in Massachusetts. I am also requesting a physical and cultural map.

Please send any information to my home at the address above. Please send the information by February 27. Thank you very much for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

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receiving a thoughtful letter, such as the one in Figure 24 from State Senator Richard Kraus. He responsed to a questions about whether he could go in the army or be a policeman.[18]

In general, a meaningful response to the content of one's writing is the writer's supreme reward. It flatters and serves as a powerful spur for motivating other acts of writing. If teachers can occasionally place the act of writing within a civic context so that students receive responses from those who have been elected or appointed to govern them, they may help their students gain a strong sense not only of the power that writing gives the writer but also of their own citizenship.

FIGURE 24

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
ROOM 511
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133
TEL. 722-1432

SEN. RICHARD A. KRAUS
FOURTH MIDDLESEX DISTRICT
ARLINGTON WINCHESTER
LEXINGTON WOBURN
HOME PHONE 648-0210

COMMITTEES:
COUNTIES
FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
HUMAN SERVICES AND ELDERLY AFFAIRS
TAXATION

25 November 1985

Dear Davy,

I just received your letter asking why kids can't help out making roads or help policemen or the army.

I'm not sure that there is any single answer to your question, but at least part of the answer must be that building roads, helping policemen and helping the army are all very dangerous things to do. I know that I would not want my young children doing these things until they are old enough to be able to recognize and deal with the danger. My guess is that most mothers and fathers feel the same way. Which is probably why kids aren't allowed to do these things.

I hope this helps!

Sincerely
Dick Kraus

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CHAPTER 5
WRITING IN CIVIC COMMUNITIES IN THE SCHOOL

Students can engage in many worthwhile civic writing activities reflecting both adversarial and collaborative modes of participation by taking part in civic communities based within the school. These communities may be imaginary or real. Whether or not they are real, the writing activities that students do for these in-school communities may help them to learn a great deal about the dynamics and specifics of writing by adults in civic communities outside the school. Moreover, some of the writing that students do in these school-based communities may be directed to public officials or other citizens in adult communities where the schools are located.

Simulated Civic Communities in the School. A remarkable example of a school-based model community is Betterburg, which was planned, organized, and maintained for the school year by grade two students in Haslett, Michigan, under the direction of their teacher, Joyce Frank. The children did an extraordinary amount of civic writing, both real and simulated. They first had to obtain information from public officials and other people in their local community on how to plan their model community. Gathering this information necessitated a great deal of letter writing. They then discovered that a great deal of other writing was also necessary for running their model community: record-keeping, voter registration lists, campaign speeches, and law-making. Teachers interested in developing an in-class imaginary community should read the details about Betterburg.[1]

The following example shows how a teacher improvised a brief simulated political activity and helped her students transform an imaginary political document into a genuine piece of advocacy writing. In response to queries by her seventh-grade students about what a political platform is, just before the national elections in the fall of 1984, Kathleen Callanan, a social studies teacher in the Plymouth, Massachusetts, undertook a five-day project.[2] First, she asked students to brainstorm issues of political importance. They mentioned such issues as arms control, air pollution, and capital punishment. Students were then asked to state their own area of interest, and small committees were formed to write a "plank" about each issue. Each plank developed by a committee was duplicated so that each student in the class had a copy. The class then met as a whole, with one student acting as chairperson. Each plank was discussed and changes were suggested and voted on. Planks approved by majority vote were included in the final platform, which was typed, duplicated, and distributed to all members of the class. The students voted to name their party "Callanan's Congress."

Mrs. Callanan then decided to use the students' writing for civic purposes outside the classroom and suggested that they send copies of their platform to their representatives. Each student was asked to write a cover letter to accompany the platform. A committee was formed to select the five best letters. The five letters were then read to the class, which selected the best one by majority vote. The students sent copies of the cover letter and the platform to their representatives in the state legislature, Representative in Congress, and U.S. Senators (see Figure 25 for a copy of the students' cover letter and their platform). Figure 26 shows a copy of the individualized letter Mrs. Callanan received from Congressional Representative Gerry Studds, the first representative to reply. Taking advantage of the word processors now available to congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., Representative Studds sent a copy of another individualized letter to each child in the class (Figure 27).

FIGURE 25

Platform of Callanan's Congress, 1984

Dear _____

Our platform was written to help you understand what the kids in Ms. Callanan's seventh grade class think about each topic. We named our party "Callanan's Congress."

Some of the topics on our platform are gun control, nuclear arms, education, E.R.A., crime and capital punishment.

We hope you take into consideration our views on these topics and our ideas for legislation.

Thank you,

The Platform

Environment

We feel we should:
Enforce laws on saving animals.
Make funds for endangered species.
Preserve trees, landmarks, wildlife, and national parks.
Help cut down on air, land, and water pollution.
More controls on nuclear plants to protect the environment.
Fund animal research for animal population control, diseases, and abuse.
Make funds available to study acid rain.

Foreign Policy
We should make serious attempts to become allies with other countries so wars will be prevented.
A limited amount of immigrants should be allowed to enter the country only if they have a supporting family in the United States and/or a stable job.

Education
Better and more schools should be built because some present schools are becoming old, run-down, and also overcrowded.
Better school budget is needed to buy supplies for school such as new books (old books are torn, worn out, and in bad condition), computers (to increase education).
No prayer in public schools should be allowed because of religious differences.
Pay should be increased for teachers to encourage more people to enter the profession.

Gun Control
These should be required by law:
Age limit 20 and above.
One month waiting period for evaluation of applicant for a gun.
Mandatory classes on the care and usage of your gun.

Crime
Robbery—more patrols in problem areas.
Drunk driving—more road blocks on weekends and holidays.
Drinking age limit—20
Rape and muggings—walking patrols in parks and desolate areas.

Nuclear Arms
Have a nuclear verifiable freeze ban with Russia and dismantle all the nuclear weapons.

Capital Punishment
We are for capital punishment because people who purposely commit murder are to receive capitol punishment.
Exceptions for self-defense and insanity (used only once).
The insane shall get psychological help.

Homeless
Every state should have a government funded home with cots, food, shelter, and medical treatment available (necessities) for the homeless for a specific period of time while receiving job training.
There should be volunteer medical workers.
The government should make people more aware of all the homeless people.

Unemployment
Loans should be easier to get for the people of low income to start a business.
Larger companies should have training programs for inexperienced applicants.
The state should make efforts to fill existing jobs for people without a lot of opportunities.

ERA
All jobs should be available to everyone regardless of race or sex.
Apartment buildings shouldn't be limited to one type of people.
If handicapped people are capable of a certain job, they shouldn't be discriminated against.
A commission will be set up to investigate abuses of mentally retarded, handicapped or children in day care facilities or hospital setting.

Teachers might also wish to use prepared curriculum materials to help their students role-play legislative hearings, city council meetings, etc. and do the writing that these roles require.[3] In Massachusetts, for example, the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State has prepared three teaching units for students in grades 4 to 8 entitled "The Election Game," "The City Game," and "The Class Meeting Game."[4] The first introduces students to the electoral process, the other two to local government. The curriculum packet for "The City Game" and "The Town Meeting Game" includes sheets for voter registration lists, sample nomination papers, and sample press releases. In the course of using the materials, students may have the opportunity to write campaign speeches, charters, petitions, by-laws, articles for town warrants, and even handbooks of parliamentary rules. According to the Press Secretary in the Public Affairs Division, hundreds of teachers have requested these materials, although there seems to be no evaluation of their use.[5] Teachers in other states might wish to contact the office of their own Secretary of State or State Department of Education to find out what materials are available for their own communities or state.[6]

Real Civic Communities in the School. Students may participate as writers in real self-governance within the school. They may write letters to the editor of their student newspaper about issues that affect the school. They may also take part as writers in student council activities. For example, students who participate in the Brookline High School Town Meeting (its student council) write agendas, minutes, proposals, motions, and nominating and campaign speeches. One student also wrote a compilation of its regulations and its legislation.[7] See Figure 28 for a copy of the introduction that the student wrote for this compilation. The student points out that this document is not a formal written constitution.

FIGURE 26

GERRY E. STUDDS
10TH DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1501 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
202-225-3111

COMMITTEES:
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MERCHANT MARINE AND
FISHERIES

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

DISTRICT OFFICES:
GREATER NEW BEDFORD
POST OFFICE BUILDING
NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 027-
617-999-1251

SOUTH SHORE
HANOVER COURT
193 ROCKLAND STREET
HANOVER, MASSACHUSETTS 02339
617-826-3999

CAPE AND ISLANDS
148 MAIN STREET
HYANNIS, MASSACHUSETTS 02601
617-771-0666

February 14, 1985

Dear Ms. Callanan:

Thank you for writing recently to outline the policy platforms of "Callanan's Congress."

It is clear from the breadth and depth of the platform positions that you spent a great deal of time discussing important public policy issues with your social studies class. I wanted, first of all, to thank you for taking the time to bring the students' views to my attention -- and, secondly, to let you know that I will reply individually to each member of your class who signed the platform.

Once again, I appreciate your interest in writing, and will look forward to hearing from you again soon.

With kind regards.

Sincerely,

Gerry E. Studds

Ms. Kathy Callanan
Nathaniel Morton School
Room 302
Lincoln Street
Plymouth, MA 02360

FIGURE 27

GERRY E. STUDDS
10TH DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1501 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
202-225-3111

COMMITTEES:
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MERCHANT MARINE AND
FISHERIES

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

DISTRICT OFFICES:

GREATER NEW BEDFORD
POST OFFICE BUILDING
NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 02740
617-999-1251

SOUTH SHORE
HANOVER COURT
183 ROCKLAND STREET
HANOVER, MASSACHUSETTS 02339
617-826-3806

CAPE AND ISLANDS
148 MAIN STREET
HYANNIS, MASSACHUSETTS 02601
617-771-0666

February 14, 1985

Dear Miss Moylan:

Just a short note to thank you for helping to prepare the platform of "Callanan's Congress."

As you know, Ms. Callanan has forwarded to me a copy of the positions you and your fellow students included in the platform. I am very impressed with how many domestic and foreign policies issues your class has discussed, and can tell you that I share your views on nuclear proliferation, education, unemployment, crime, civil rights, homelessness, and the environment. You can count on my continued efforts in these regards during the 99th Congress. Please feel free to let me know if I can provide any further information or assistance on any specific questions you may have.

Once again, I appreciate your taking the time to contact me, and will certainly look forward to hearing from you again soon.

With kind regards.

Sincerely,

Gerry E. Studds

Miss Christel Moylan
Nathaniel Morton School
Room 302
Lincoln Street
Plymouth, MA 02360

FIGURE 28

THE HIGH SCHOOL
115 Greenough Street
Brookline, Massachusetts 02146

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The following pages contain all the proposals which Brookline High School Town Meeting has passed since its inception. Everything included has completed the necessary process, which means that it has been approved by the Brookline High School Headmaster, Dr. Robert B. McCarthy.

The pieces are compiled according to two categories. The first group contains all the regulations concerning the running of Town Meeting. The second is all the school wide legislation.

There is no other constitution or such document. Town Meeting was established by the acceptance of the proposal entitled "Implementation of the Town Meeting Form of Government at Brookline High School" in the spring of 1981.

By adding to the existing regulations concerning the running of Town Meeting and to the school wide legislation, Town Meeting will continue to define itself and its role in the lives of the Brookline High School community. That is the democratic process for which Town Meeting was started.

Myhal Springer
Class of 1983

Authorized by:
Catherine Colglazier
Town Manager

Virginia Franklin, whose long-term civic project with her high school students on voting in primary elections was described in Chapter 3, also engaged in many others during her teaching career. Some involved student council activities, including the writing of a constitution and a bill of rights for the student body. Figure 29 shows a copy of the formal written constitution her students wrote for the student body of San Rafael High School.

FIGURE 29

The Constitution of the Student Body
of San Rafael High School

Article I

Section 1—The Student Body of San Rafael High School shall be composed of all enrolled students of San Rafael High School, each of whom shall be eligible to vote in student body elections.*Section 2*—The San Rafael City Schools Board of Education and the San Rafael High School Administration shall have sovereignty over all decisions made by the San Rafael High School Student Council.

Article II

Section 1—The San Rafael High School Student Cabinet shall have jurisdiction over special activities, Group Charters, Election Code, Spirit Code, and all responsibilities of the individual offices. Charters shall be approved only during the first four weeks of the first semester, and the first two weeks of the second semester.

Section 2—The Cabinet shall consist of: President, Vice-president, Director of Elections, Director of Spirit, one President from each of the four (4) classes, four (4) Representatives-at-large, and a Representative to the San Rafael Board of Education.

Section 3—The following Cabinet members shall be elected by direct vote of the student body: President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Secretary, Director of Publicity, Director of Elections, Director of Spirit, four (4) Representatives-at-large, and Representative to the San Rafael Board of Education. The Class Presidents shall be elected by direct vote of their respective classes. The elections shall be held during the first two (2) weeks of May, except for the office of Freshman Class President, which shall be held during the third and fourth weeks of September. All elections shall be run in accordance with the Election Code. The term of office for all officers, except for the Freshman Class President, shall commence at the beginning of the first semester following their election the previous May. The term of office for the Freshman Class President shall commence as soon as he/she is elected.

Section 4—The responsibilities of the officers of the Cabinet shall consist of the following:

President shall preside over all Cabinet and Student Council meetings. He/She shall be the ceremonial and the administrative head of the Cabinet and of the Student Council, and shall be responsible for the coordination of all Student Council functions.

Vice President shall be responsible for all special Student Council activities and shall supervise all actions required by school regulations for Student Council sponsored dances, shows, assemblies, and programs. In the even that the President is unable to fulfill any of his/her duties, the Vice-president shall assume these duties.

Treasurer shall be the student bookkeeper of student body finances, and shall be responsible for the annual budget.

Secretary shall be responsible for taking minutes at all Cabinet and Student Council meetings, and shall be responsible for the organization and safe-keeping of Group Charters, records, correspondence, and the calendar of events.

Director of Publicity shall be the Student Council's public communications and relations representative within the school and the community.

Director of Elections shall organize and supervise all student body elections according to the Election Code.

Director of Spirit shall organize and supervise all rallies, and shall coordinate the Rally/Marching Band with the spirit leaders. He/She shall be responsible for organizing and supervising the selection of spirit leaders according to the Spirit Code. He/She shall be responsible for the publicity of spirit activities. He/She shall be the official student body representative to the San Rafael High School Boosters Club.

Class Presidents shall be responsible for all fundraising and activities of their respective classes. They shall represent their classes to the Student Council.

Representatives-at-large shall perform duties assigned to them by the President. They shall represent the student body to the Student Council.

Representative to the Board of Education shall be the official liaison between the student body of San Rafael High School and the San Rafael Board of Education. He/She shall attend the Board of Education meetings. He/She shall work closely with the San Rafael High School Student Lobby.

Section 5—The Cabinet meetings shall be held at least once a week, according to the schedule and parliamentary procedures set by the President and approved by the Cabinet at the beginning of their term. In order to conduct official business there shall be at least two-thirds (2/3) of the Cabinet members present. Each Cabinet member shall be entitled to one (1) vote.

Article III

Section 1—The Student Council of San Rafael High School shall be the lawmaking body, shall approve the budget, and shall be responsible for the revision of the San Rafael High School Student Body Constitution.

Section 2—The Student Council shall be a legislative body composed of the Cabinet and one representative from each of the chartered groups.

Section 3—Group Representatives shall be selected no later than the first six (6) weeks of the first semester, and the first four (4) weeks of the second semester. They shall be selected according to the procedures specified in their respective group charters. No Group Representative shall be a member of the Student Council in any other capacity.

Section 4—Group Representatives shall be the official liaisons between the Student Council and their respective groups.

Section 5—Student Council meetings shall be held at least twice a month according to the schedule and parliamentary procedures set by the President and approved by the Student Council at their first meeting which shall be held during the seventh week of the first semester. In order to conduct official business, there shall be at least two-thirds (2/3) of the Cabinet members present, and two-thirds (2/3) of the Group Representatives present. Each Cabinet member shall be entitled to one (1) vote. Each Group Representative shall be entitled to a vote equal to the number one (1) less than the number of members of the Cabinet divided by the number of Group Representatives in office, and shall be determined by the number of Group Representatives in office at the beginning of each term.

Article IV

Section 1—The student body of San Rafael High School shall have the right to nullify any policy or decision of the Student Council. To this end, any student of the Student Body of San Rafael High School shall present to the Student Council a petition containing signatures numbering twenty per cent (20%) of the student body. This petition shall demand a general election concerning the issue being appealed. The election shall be held within ten (10) school days of the formal presentation of the petition. A nullification of a Student Council decision shall require a majority of fifty per cent plus one (50% + 1) of the votes cast.

Section 2—The Student Body of San Rafael High School shall have the right to impeach any officer of the Cabinet, excluding the Class Presidents. Grounds for impeachment shall only include failure to comply with Article II, Section 4, regarding the specifications of the relevant office. To this end, any student of the student body shall present to the Student Council a petition containing signatures numbering twenty-five percent (25%) of the student body. This petition shall demand a general election concerning the impeachment of the officer in question. The election shall be held within ten (10) school days of the formal presentation of the petition. An impeachment by the student body shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the votes cast. Individual classes shall have the right to impeach their respective Class Presidents. To this end, any student of the respective class shall formally present a petition to the Student Council containing signatures numbering twenty-five per cent (25%) of the respective class members. This petition shall demand a class election regarding the impeachment of the respective Class President. An impeachment of a Class President shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the votes cast.

Article V

Section 1—This Constitution shall be amended if the amendment is favored by two-thirds (2/3) of the Student Council.

Section 2—The enumeration in this Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny any other rights retained by the student body.

Section 3—This Constitution shall be considered the supreme law of the San Rafael High School Student Council.

Students may do a great deal of varied writing in real or simulated civic communities in their schools. However, the amount of writing they do in student councils depends very much on the kind of responsibilities these councils have been allowed to have, how active they are, and whether they have a budget to use. Student council activities can be particularly meaningful if they are supported by student fees (their own money) so that all students have a financial interest in what their student council does. A good part of the motivation for citizen participation in adult political life stems from citizens' concerns about how their tax revenues are spent. This kind of motivation should also be tapped for student government. All the values that civic writing has for both writer and reader in civic communities outside the school inhere in the civic writing students may do as part of self-government within the school. And as Figure 29 suggests, students may even have an opportunity to compose one of the fundamental documents that citizens in democratic countries occasionally need to write.

CHAPTER 6
SUGGESTIONS AND PRECAUTIONS

This chapter includes general considerations and suggestions for making civic writing a soundly conceived and integral part of the curriculum. Several precautions are also presented, which teachers should consider when introducing contexts and purposes for civic writing into their classrooms. These precautions are based on observations and discussion with teachers and administrators.

Writing for a Variety of Purposes. All students should have opportunities for both advocacy writing and other kinds of civic writing during their school years. They will also benefit from writing for a wide range of specific purposes within each of these broad categories so that they come to know the many different ways they can participate as writers in the civic process. They may write to propose, to oppose, to criticize, to solve a problem, to complain, to defend, to inquire, to give thanks, to express concern, to correct, to inform, to make judgments, or to support.

Students may also write to praise, although this, unfortunately, may be the least used purpose for writing a letter to a public official. There is almost no one who does not appreciate praise; yet, few textbooks or teachers seem to invite students to write a letter complimenting a public official (or anyone else, for that matter) on work well done. Teachers can expand their students' conceptions of useful purposes for which citizens can write letters by encouraging them to write about something other than criticism or complaints. Letter of praise about public officials or their employees may have even higher-level readers than letters of complaint. For example, Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts personally reads all letters of praise about state employees that are sent to his office.[1] He cannot personally read most of the mail he receives, because an estimated 600 to 800 letters flow into his office each week. But letters of praise are one of the only two categories of correspondence he wants to read personally. The other category consists of highly informative letters containing new ideas on current issues.

Writing for a Variety of Audiences. Students also need opportunities to write to different types of civic or political audiences, even if the same general letter form is used. Students may write to public officials or representatives at all levels of government and in all departments of government. For example, in the examples offered in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, students wrote to the President of the United States (as well as the leaders of two other countries), a governor, a mayor, boards of selectmen, state and national senators and representatives, and other public officials. Students may also write to community civic leaders, labor leaders, business executives, newspaper or magazine editors, radio or television news commentators, as well as leaders or members of public or private interest groups. They may also write to other citizens, neighbors, their family, and peers.

Teachers should note that, unlike other letters, letters to editors have an anonymous audience, however specific that anonymous audience is (for example, readers of the Boston *Herald*). Letters to editors are not identical to letters to legislators or to specific public or private officials, and in fact are often similar to essays. Writing letters to an identified or identifiable reader, familiar or unfamiliar, may remove much of the difficulty students have in conceptualizing the abstraction labeled "audience," and may be much easier for students than writing a letter to an editor. Writing to an anonymous audience is probably the more difficult task.

Writing as Part of a Group. There is probably no one aspect of civic writing more important for fledgling civic writers to experience than group writing. The self-consciousness, anxiety, and reluctance that many beginning, or less able, writers feel about writing to others can be considerably diminished by opportunities to share in co-authoring a piece of civic writing with their peers. Students pool their knowledge and experience, and no one student need feel as vulnerable as the solo writer may feel. The way in which Nancy Olson's students developed their letter to a legislator, described in Chapter 3, is one good example of group writing for civic purposes. Kathleen Callanan's project, described in Chapter 5, is another example. In her project simulating the development of a party platform, students worked in small groups to achieve a small "group voice" on each plank, and then worked together as a class to achieve a larger group voice, a process very similar to the one used at the national level. They experienced a democratic process in their group participation and in the focus of their work.

As these projects may suggest, there is another reason why the experience of co-authoring a piece of civic writing is useful, if not essential, for students. The blending of many individual voices in a co-authored document is often indispensable for group action. As James Kinneavy points out in his discussion of the writing of the *Declaration of Independence*, although Thomas Jefferson wrote the basic draft, it was revised and corrected a total of 132 times, first by a committee,

and then by the Continental Congress; group voice was achieved by many compromises on deeply-felt issues, one of which was slavery.[2] Group writing may also be useful for providing ideas and support to a single delegated author. Civic or political groups have evolved various processes for working out the development of a text that all can agree to and support, but we know very little about how different civic or political groups do this—never mind do it well. Learning how to work out a piece of writing together in a harmonious way is an educational experience that needs much more emphasis that it has received.[3]

The High School Senior Paper or the College Research Paper. While civic writing activities should be part of the elementary and middle school curriculum, they should especially be part of students' experiences as they approach the age of enfranchisement. School committees or high school administrators and teachers might well consider mandating the following project for all students as a graduation requirement. The completion of this requirement for a diploma would symbolize the initiation of the student into civic affairs at a most appropriate time in the student's life. College instructors might also consider the following project as a composition requirement for all freshmen.

In this project, students would be asked to select a piece of legislation currently under consideration at any level of government and to research the background for that issue thoroughly. The choice of issue would be strictly the student's. There are hundreds of bills under consideration in local municipalities, state legislatures, or the United States Congress at any one time, and students should have no difficulty in finding one that appeals to their interests. Local legislators or other public officials could easily apprise teachers or students of the significant pieces of legislation that they anticipate will get legislative consideration or action at the local or state level. Congressional aides could provide lists of important bills under consideration in Congress.

Students would be required to demonstrate their ability to use information from various sources of knowledge, such as personal experience, observations, talks with other people, and written material of all kinds. The result of this research would be formulating a reasoned personal opinion about the issue and writing a coherent letter to a legislator involved with the issue urging support or opposition.[4] The letter would contain reasons for the writer's position, supported by as much useful information as the writer decides is necessary for an effective letter. Attached to the letter would be a summary of the writer's research indicating all the relevant arguments pro and con and the writer's response to each of these arguments. (See the Appendix for a copy of a one-page description of how to write a letter to a legislator, prepared by the League of Women Voters Education Fund.) A copy of the letter (and the summary of the research) would be retained for the student's cumulative file or permanent composition folder, with the legislator's response to the student attached to it.

If possible, two faculty members would be responsible for supervising the student's research and drafts—a member of the English Department and a faculty member from the discipline that seems most relevant to the content of the legislation. Professional time would, of course, have to be allowed for coordinating and supervising the project. There should also be a third person to help advise the student, someone from an organization in the community that has a legitimate interest in the bill; the organization should also be of the student's choice.[5]

The student's relationship to an outside organization is an extremely important feature of the project for several reasons. Students need to know what community organizations exist and what specific political or civic interests they have. Seeking an appropriate one will be a learning experience in itself. Students also need to know how these organizations work and how they enhance the individual citizen's efforts in any civic endeavor. These organizations, which can range from city- to town-wide groups to neighborhoods or ethnic groups, typically provide information and a group identity to their members. As effective as citizens may be on their own, their effectiveness is almost always enhanced when they act with others on issues of mutual concern. Students need to be introduced to the rich network of voluntary organizations that provide the cohesive links in community life. This requirement can provide that introduction.

Clearly, a tutorial relationship with a member of one voluntary community organization cannot be a substitute for active membership in that organization. But students could learn something about adult concerns in their communities by reading the literature of the organization. And if they wished to take the time to attend the meetings of the organization or to follow its activities closely, then they could learn something about the interplay, both cooperative and adversarial, between these groups and their elected or appointed officials.

How might teachers and students find out names of relevant civic and political groups and obtain information on a particular topic? First, they may request a list of state-wide civic and political groups from a Citizen's Information Service in their Secretary of State's office; all lobbyists at the state level must be registered. Information about local groups can be obtained from a local Chamber of Commerce, or from the offices of municipal, county, or town clerks. Students may also contact their legislators to find out who sponsored or helped develop the particular piece of legislation they

are interested in researching. They might even contact members of the research staff for the legislative committee dealing with the proposed bill. All legislative committees have paid research staff, and these people may be the best source of information about the political and civic organizations interested in a particular bill.

Precautions On Teaching Civic Writing. In addition to general suggestions discussed above, teachers should consider five precautions, which can be used as guidelines for planning and conducting learning activities on civic writing.

1. Do students really understand the issue?
2. Is there information about all points of view on the issue?
3. Are letters to editors written with thought and care?
4. Will there be a responsive reader?
5. Has all wording been reviewed before delivery?

Do students really understand the issue? Before teachers try to bring in current issues by means of an article or catchword in the news, they need to think carefully about whether their students can respond genuinely to these issues with some degree of understanding. Issues involving foreign policy and defense are usually too complex for most elementary school students. Teachers can legitimately introduce topics they are interested in and know about, but these topics must have clear meaning to the students, and students must be capable of formulating intellectually respectable responses to these topics. If students cannot grasp basic issues and facts in a major public controversy that they are being invited to write about, the teacher's judgment in assigning it may be rightly questioned by parents and administrators. Moreover, a concern may arise as to whether students are being used for political rather than educational purposes.

Is there information about all points of view on the issue? All sides of an issue should be available for discussion, and students must have some choice in how they respond to an issue if teachers are to avoid the charge of bias. Unanimous opinions on any substantive issue are rare in heterogeneous groups of people, and parents or other observers might be suspicious of a teacher who elicits unanimous views on a controversial issue. The function of the minority report and the value of minority opinion should be demonstrated where it is relevant. It is most unfortunate that the word "minority" seems to have come to designate permanent features of an individual, not the status or individuality of one's ideas. The true political meaning of the term needs to be regained. Students need to see that they can be part of a minority on one issue, and part of the majority on another, just as the Justices on our Supreme Court often are.

Further, issues should not be posed so that one point of view about an issue can be easily construed as the work of the devil. Most political issues in a democracy stem from different and sincerely held ways of looking at a question or choice, each of which may represent a valid element of the common good. If students are to develop a willingness to see compromise as a legitimate response to controversy about public policies and the allocation of public resources, then issues must be presented to students in a way that elicits some respect for various points of view. Basically, students should be taught to be wary of dichotomous—or black-and-white—thinking and labeling. For example, "pro-life" implies that opponents are anti-life; advocates of "education for peace" imply that other educators or critics may support education for war.

Are letters to editors written with thought and care? Students need to learn that the local newspaper is an important forum for thoughtful discussions of community issues. As suggested by Alice Feeney's use of the "Student Voices" column in her local newspaper in Illinois, local newspapers can be an excellent outlet and an excellent stimulus for civic writing. There may be no better way to influence students to read their local newspapers—or at least look through them. The letters to the editor column is often considered the "lifeblood" of a community newspaper; it shows that the newspaper has "live" readers. Next in importance, according to one editor,[6] are the letters that respond to letters to the editor. Letters to the editor are often the only way that serious debate on public issues can take place within a community and reach large numbers of citizens. Their importance for local issues, especially, cannot be overestimated. Lise Ede, a writing researcher, analyzed a large number of letters to the editor about an issue in her community (the controversy involved the efforts of a local group to influence the decisions of the school board about text selection and curriculum development.)[7] She suggested that while no one letter makes a critical difference, "cumulatively they play an important role in influencing public opinion—and thus in determining who wins elections, what bond issues pass, and what is taught in our schools."

Because of their importance, it behooves teachers of all subjects to make sure that students learn to take the writing of letters to newspapers seriously. Too often letters to the editor are considered primarily as outlets for bursts of feeling. For example, a chapter in a high school textbook that includes suggestions about writing letters to newspapers and magazines is entitled "Sound Off!"[8] At one end of the section on writing to newspapers and magazines, in which a number of examples illustrating this philosophy are shown, the textbook advises students to write their own real letter to an editor in the following manner:[9]

> . . . Choose something you're really concerned about and sound off! You'll be contributing to the general welfare by participating; you'll release some of those pent-up emotions and feel better; and you'll see your own words in print! Try it.

Nothing could be more destructive to the effort to raise the quality of dialogue on public issues than such advice. No one "contributes" to the general welfare by venting pent-up emotions in print. Certainly the best civic writing contains strong feelings, but the appeal is as much to the mind as to the heart. If teachers do not stress that civic writing should be rational and courteous discourse, however strongly the writer feels about an issue, they have abdicated their own responsibilities as teachers.

Will there be a responsive reader? Teachers should try to determine whether their students will receive a response of some kind to the content of their writing before encouraging a civic writing activity. If students are to believe that civic writing is not a frivolous activity or an academic exercise, the content of their writing must matter in some way to somebody; otherwise, what they have written is pseudo-civic writing. If, in the example described in Chapter 3, the content of what the students wrote in their letters on environmental problems to the governor of Massachusetts was actually considered in some way by an official in the office of the Secretary of Environmental Affairs, then their letters constitute genuine civic writing.

Teachers need to make the same determination before asking students to write an evaluation of a program or service from which they have benefited. If no one is going to take seriously what the students say and reply in some individualized way, that is, with more than just an acknowledgment of their letters, then it may not be a positive experience at all for the students. Thus, if possible, teachers should try to secure cooperation from the reader(s) in advance before undertaking a student evaluation of an educational program or activity.

Has all writing been reviewed before delivery? Finally, no matter what kind of civic writing students do, it is a wise policy for teachers to check everything students have been invited to write before it is sent to recipients. There may be nothing more damaging to a school or to a teacher than for public officials to receive obscenities or other tasteless or offensive material. Critical comments about teachers or vicious remarks about a teacher's character can also create lasting harm—and unnecessary problems with union officials. Moreover, while public officials tend to excuse deficiencies in protocol in a letter from an older person who may not have had the advantage of formal schooling, they are disturbed by letters from young people that do not demonstrate easily-learned courtesies, such as a proper greeting. The President, governors, senators, and congressional representatives all have easily obtainable proper names, and letters coming from a classroom should use an official's formal title and name. If students are encouraged, or allowed, to write on their own at home to a public official, they should also be reminded to use inoffensive and appropriate stationery. In general, students should learn to be concerned about anything that may distract their readers from complete attention to the content of their writing.[10]

Concluding Remarks. A discussion about citizen education appeared in a recent issue of *Social Education*, a professional journal for social studies educators. Reporting on results of recent surveys of student attitudes in the 1980s in comparison to those in the 1970s and 1960s, Mary Hepburn, a professor of social studies education, notes that today's students, when asked to rate their goals, give their lowest ratings to community improvement and community leadership.[11] Moreover, two-thirds of the students polled showed no desire for political involvement beyond voting. Although she found some signs of interest in larger, non-personal goals, their lack of commitment to community responsibility and to productive group activities was disturbing to her. In a companion article in this issue, David Mathews, President of the Kettering Foundation, suggests that the schools need to focus on the concept of civic-mindedness if they are to develop socially responsible and civically competent citizens.[12] But the question remains: How do we develop civic-mindedness? Mathews argues that teachers may promote civic intelligence by engaging their students in "good political talk" in the classroom. However, while civic talk in the classroom is important and can connect the classroom to the larger civic community, by itself it does not give students experience participating in that community. It is clearly necessary, but it is not sufficient.

The public schools may be able to prepare their students for responsible citizenship in part by providing them with meaningful experiences as civic writers. As we all know, there is much more to civic participation than writing. Civic participation may include attending meetings or other gatherings, listening and speaking to others about political candidates and issues, reading or gathering vast amounts of information, spending long hours sealing and mailing letters or telephoning people, devising and putting on benefits to raise money, and watching the polls, and, of course, voting in elections. Moreover, civic activities require much more than writing skills. Citizens need social and organizational skills, problem-solving and creative thinking skills, and effective speaking skills. But writing is the most powerful mode of learning we know, and it should be used as much for civic purposes as for academic purposes. If some of the writing students do in school could be directed towards the civic community outside the school,

it would serve at least two basic goals. First, students would learn about the civic purposes of a democracy. Second, they would learn how to address these civic purposes through writing. They might then become more knowledgeable about the entire civic activity in which the writing is embedded. In addition, it would give writing a focus and a context that would help students value learning to write well.

Clearly, civic writing does not seem to pose inherent problems for students at any age. To judge from the examples in this book, students can undertake civic writing at all ages and for a variety of civic purposes. Evaluative, persuasive, and informational writing occurred in the elementary grades as well as at higher levels of education, and with academically poor students, academically capable students, and completely heterogeneous groups of students. If there are any real obstacles to civic writing in the schools, they arise from other sources; from a fear that civic writing is too "political" for teachers to do; from a skeptical attitude among teachers that it simply cannot be done in school; or from the complexity of many of the issues themselves and the limited amount of class time a teacher can devote, or is willing to devote, to reading, talking, and writing about civic or political issues. Social studies and science teachers are reluctant to take time away from the teaching of their subjects for non-academic writing. English teachers are reluctant to take time away from the study of literature for discussing current civic or political issues and then for writing about these issues rather than about personal or literary interests. These are serious obstacles, but they are not insurmountable. As the examples in this book show, motivated and imaginative teachers in English, social studies, and science classes have made the time and found ways to provide their students with a variety of appropriate purposes for civic writing, either for planned composition assignments, as part of planned projects lasting months or even years, or as spontaneous activities. In each example, students engaged in an activity that showed them how adults may participate in the civic process.

A philosophical justification for giving students opportunities for genuine participation, rather than simply preparing them for participation, can be found in the thinking of John Dewey, who wrote extensively about education in a democracy. At the heart of his ideas on pedagogy was a conviction that students learn more from well-chosen activities than from passive absorption of knowledge. He believed that students need to be actively involved through projects in the subject they are learning about, and that the quality of their learning is very much determined by the nature and intensity of these project-generated activities. Dewey also maintained that the school should be an active participant in the life of its community, rather than, as he saw it, "set apart" and "isolated from the ordinary conditions and motives of life."[13] For Dewey, the goals of education in a democracy were, above all, social and political. The kind of development educators want, he suggested, should guide the kind of experiences they engage students in.

If, as Dewey believed, the public schools have an obligation to provide students with experiences that are a legitimate and vital part of their society, then one way for schools to meet this obligation is to encourage students to participate in the civic and political life of their national, state, or local community through appropriate writing activities. Teachers who see their students only as potential workers, or as students bound for higher levels of education, or as seekers after personal enrichment and expression miss seeing them in the role of citizen, which is perhaps most essential to the vitality of a democratic society.

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APPENDIX

HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

The League of Women Voters of the United States has prepared the following guidelines for writing effective letters to officials in government. *This document is reprinted here with permission from the League of Women Voters of the United States. It is Publication Number 346 of the League of Women Voters Education Fund.* Teachers are encouraged to use these guidelines to provide effective instruction on civic writing.

Introduction. Letters are still the most widely used form of communication to House and Senate offices. One excellent exercise for students is to have them try their hands at writing and sending letters to their legislators. Each letter will be read and answered. Let students know that the amount of mail on a particular piece of legislation frequently helps determine the representative's approach to an issue. In fact, some members use their "mail count" on a bill as the sole determinant when voting. A student's letter may be answered with a form letter, particularly if it is on an issue or bill on which mail has been heavy. However, whether students receive a form letter or a handwritten response from their representative, the important thing is that their communication will have been received and noted.

Remind students that if they are writing to a committee member, they may also wish to write to their own representative on the same subject.

A Sample Letter. Below is a sample letter that you may use in your class to illustrate some of the aspects of a good letter. Once you've discussed the key points, have your students write a letter, using the bill that each one has been following. Make sure the letters are mailed. Have the students bring the responses into class.

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351 Manor Road
Hometown, CA 90603
September 21, 1987

The Honorable Lilian B. Lawmaker
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ms. Lawmaker:

I was pleased to read in the Hometown News that you spoke to the Downtown Merchants Association in favor of increased recreational opportunities for young people. I agree with your point that this is an important tool in the fight against juvenile delinquency.

I hope that this means you will support HR 2518, the National Park Improvement Act, which authorizes additional federal funds for maintaining facilities in national parks. This bill has recently been reported out of the House Works and Transportation Committee and will reach the floor shortly.

I have enclosed an editorial from our local newspaper describing the dangerous and unhealthy conditions in Nearby National Park. My Boy Scout Explorer troop and I have spoken to the rangers at the park and they tell us that additional funding would help alleviate these conditions. My family and I found similar conditions at several of the national parks that we visited this summer.

I know that you have been reluctant to commit more funds for this purpose in the past, but I think that if you saw the conditions here, you would agree that something must be done. My classmates and I would be happy to take you on a tour of Nearby Park the next time you are in the district.

Sincerely,

Larry Outdoorsman
Senior, Hometown High School

Twelve Guidelines. Following are twelve ideas that should be followed in writing letters to public officials. These ideas can also be used as criteria for judging letters written by others.

1. Include a return address
2. Be sure to use a correct salutation—for senators, "Dear Senator Smith;" for representatives, "Dear Mr. or Ms. Jones."
3. Be courteous and reasonable. Indicate areas of agreement, not just opposition.
4. Be brief and to the point. Discuss only the issue and/or one bill in each letter; identify a bill by number or title if you can.
5. Show that you have solid information about the bill, what it does and where it is in the legislative process.
6. Include pertinent materials that support your point.
7. Relate local needs to national legislation. Include first-hand knowledge of what is happening in your community.
8. Indicate if you are a member of a group with a particular interest in the bill.
9. Show that you have done some research into the issue.
10. Show that you are familiar with the member's past actions on an issue, especially if you are trying to change his or her mind.
11. Offer to provide more information, if requested.
12. Identify your occupation—if you are a student, say so and identify your school.

Other Helpful Hints. Here are additional ideas that writers of letter to public officials should keep in mind.

- Write legibly—Handwritten letter are fine if they are readable.
- Use your own words and your own stationery.

- Feel free to write, if you have a question or problem dealing with procedures of, or services from government agencies. Congressional offices can often help you cut though the red tape or give you advice that will save you time and wasted effort.
- If you have ideas about an issue you would like to see incorporated in legislation, write early in session before a bill has been introduced.
- Write the chair or members of a committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested, if you have facts which you think should influence his or her thinking. (If the chair is not from your state or district, also write to your own representative or senators. As a constituent, you have more influence with them.)
- Don't apologize for taking your senator's or representative's time. If you are brief and to the point, he or she is glad to hear from you.
- Don't say, "I hope this gets by your secretary." This only irritates the staff.
- Don't be rude or threatening. It will get you nowhere. Don't be vague. Be specific about the issues and what you want done about them.
- Don't write to a member from another district or state just because you disagree politically with your own senators or representative. Congressional courtesy calls for the recipient of such a letter to forward it to the member from the district or state involved.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); the authors credit sociologist Edward Shils with originating the term, *civic culture*.

2. Stuart Langton, "What is Citizen Participation?" in *Citizen Participation in America: Essays on the State of the Art*, edited by Stuart Langton (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1978).

3. Edwin Fenton, Anthony Penna, and Mindella Schultz, *Comparative Political Systems: An Inquiry Approach*, Holt Social Studies Curriculum (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973), 285.

4. In an essay entitled "Political Socialization and Political Education in Schools," in *Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory and Research*, edited by Stanley Renshon (New York: Free Press, 1977), John Patrick claims that tensions exist between two groups of political educators, those who, according to Patrick, seek to develop critical attitudes towards existing political practices and beliefs and those who, according to Patrick, seek "conformity to the establishment" or "socialization to the status quo."

5. See, for example, Fred Newmann, *Education for Citizen Action: Challenge for Secondary Curriculum* (Berkeley, CA: McCutchen Publishing Corporation, 1975).

6. Stuart Langton, "What Is Citizen Participation?"

7. *Introduction to Aristotle*, second edition, ed. Richard P. McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

8. Henry Steele Commager, "Founding Farmer," a review of *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, edited by Merrill D. Peterson (New York: The Library of America, 1985), in *The New York Times Book Review* (7 July 1985).

9. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Knopf, 1945).

10. As a contemporary example, close to 300 citizens serve regularly as Town Meeting Members and in other non-paying elective offices in the town of Brookline. In addition, in 1984, the Board of Selectmen appointed 222 other citizens to citizen boards and advisory committees, a number that has been increasing regularly since 1959, according to a report on the executive branch of government by the League of Women Voters of Brookline (mimeo, 1984).

11. In a report entitled "The Condition of Teaching," issued by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 1985, C. Emily Feistritzer notes that students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds may constitute about one-third of public elementary and secondary school enrollment by the mid-nineties.

12. Carl Tjerandsen, *Education for Citizenship: A Foundation's Experience* (Santa Cruz, CA: Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation, Inc., 1980).

13. For example, see Sidney Verba, Norman Nie, and Jae-On-Kim, *The Modes of Democratic Participation: A Cross-National Comparison* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1971).

14. Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Colonel Yancey, January 6, 1816," in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Memorial Edition), ed. Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, DC: Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States, 1903), Volume XIV, 379.

15. Adrienne Koch, *The Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), Chapter 17.

16. Jonathan Kozol, *Illiterate America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1985).

17. Kenneth Levine, "Functional Literacy: Fond Illusions and False Economies," *Harvard Educational Review*, 52 (August 1982): 262.

18. For example, the title of the text edited by Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami—*Writing in Nonacademic Settings* (New York: Guilford Publications, 1985)—implies more than the text offers; the only nonacademic settings that are discussed in this anthology of 14 essays are professional or organizational. None of the authors of these essays suggests the existence or significance of other kinds of rhetorical contexts for writing.

19. John M. Brewer, *Wellsprings of Democracy: Guidance for Local Societies* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952). One of the chapters in this book is devoted to a discussion of the kind of writing that members of an organization need to do to maintain a democratically-run organization.

20. Morris Janowitz, *The Reconstruction of Patriotism: Education for Civic Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). A major theme of this book is the need for compulsory national service by all youth as the way to develop civic consciousness.

21. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).

CHAPTER TWO

1. *Framework for the English Curriculum of the 80s: Grades 9-12* (Philadelphia, PA: Office of Curriculum and Instruction, the School District of Philadelphia, 1982).

2. *High School English Curriculum Objectives* (Boston: Boston Public Schools, 1983).

3. *English Language Arts Syllabus for the South Burlington Middle School and South Burlington High School* (South Burlington, VT: South Burlington School District, 1985).

4. *Reading Curriculum, Kindergarten-Grade 9* (New Britain, CT: New Britain Public Schools, 1984).

5. Miles Olson, Carol Kuykendall, Cherie Lyons, and Nancy Brown, *Composition and Applied Grammar: The Writing Process, Grade 12* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1982).

6. Gary Forlini, *Grammar and Composition, Level 6* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1982).

7. James M. McCrimmon, *Writing with a Purpose*, Seventh Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980).

8. Eliot Wigginton, *Sometimes a Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1985).

9. Walter Parker and John Jarolimek, *Citizenship and the Critical Role of the Social Studies* (Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1984).

10. William A. McClenaghan, *Magruder's American Government* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1985).

11. Mary Jane Turner, *Political Education in the United States: History, Status, Critical Analysis, and an Alternative Model.* Unpublished dissertation, University of Colorado, 1978.

12. A few suggested activities have the potential for becoming substantive civic writing assignments. For example, at the end of a unit entitled "Governing the Communities," a suggested activity reads as follows: "Obtain a copy of your city's zoning ordinance(s) and accompanying map(s). Examine and evaluate those documents. Do you recommend any changes in zoning laws? If so, why?" How much better if students were asked to prepare their recommendations in writing and then present their ideas to their local planning department.

13. Fritz Mayer and Bruce James, with Bruce Jentleson, *Close Up Special Focus: Energy* (Arlington, VA: Close Up Foundation, 1982).

14. Fred Newmann, Thomas Bertocci, and Ruthanne Landsness, *Skills in Citizen Action: An English-Social Studies Program for Secondary Schools* (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Co., 1979).

15. Ina Mullis, *Citizenship/Social Studies Achievement: Trends Over Time.* Paper presented at the 1978 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Toronto) as part of a symposium entitled: "Data Exploration as Research: The National Assessment."

16. Elizabeth Farquhar and Karen Dawson, *Citizen Education Today: Developing Civic Competencies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of H.E.W., Office of Education, 1979). OE Publication NO. 79-07007, 1979.

17. R. Freeman Butts, "The Revival of Civic Learning Requires a Prescribed Curriculum," *Liberal Education* 68 (1982): 377-401.

CHAPTER THREE

1. It was not easy to locate examples of civic writing in public school classrooms. I gathered as much information as I could from personal contacts and from such resources as the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, the Educational Resources Center at the Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., and the Social Practices Information File. I also placed an advertisement soliciting information on projects or lessons involving civic writing in an issue of the *Newsletter of the New England Association of Teachers of English, The Social Studies Professional, The Writing Lab Newsletter, and Science and Children.* I am grateful to the editors of all these publications for their help and cooperation.

2. I thank Ann Hoyle, former Director of the High Ability Learner Program of the public school system in Easton, Massachusetts, for the abundance of information she sent me. I also thank Esther Markman, Legislative Office, Department of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, for sending me copies of the newspaper publicity the students' bill received and for a copy of the amendment to the "act relative to the establishment of banks by certain students."

3. I thank Virginia Franklin for all the information she gave me over the telephone and for the abundance of material she sent me. I am also grateful to Eric Goldman of the Close-Up Foundation for bringing Dr. Franklin's activities to my attention.

4. I thank John Zippert, publisher of *The Greene County Democrat*, for sending me copies of the students' letters to the editor.

5. I thank Nancy Oldon for sending me a copy of her students' letters and for information about the way in which she developed the lesson.

6. I thank Sandra Lawrence, an instructor at Bunker Hill Community College, Charlestown, Massachusetts, for sending me a copy of her writing assignment and for copies of some of her students' letters and the responses they received.

7. Personal communication from William Hayner, December 1985. I also thank Donald Jordan, Research Director, Committee on State Administration, State House, Boston, Massachusetts, for all his valuable information about recent student-initiated bills in Massachusetts.

8. Chapter 63, An Act Establishing A Staue of Liberty Awareness Day, *Acts of 1984*, General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 27.

9. I thank Palma Johnson and the staff of the John F. Kennedy School in Franklin, Massachusetts, for information about the history of the "ladybug" bill.

10. I thank Jay Sugarman, State Representative Eleanor Myerson, and her legislative aide, Shelley Beeby, for information about the bill to establish the corn muffin as the official state muffin.

11. I thank Jean D. Johnson, Director of Special Projects, Secretary of State's Office, State Capitol, Helena, Montana, for all the information she sent me.

12. *The Initiative Process: A Lesson in Citizen Participation for Montana Students*, compiled by: Jim Waltermire, Secretary of State, State Capitol, Helena, Montana 59620, 1984. See also a curriculum unit entitled "Montana Pride—Vote to Show It," with five lessons designed to help high school students understand Montana's governmental process, also published by the Secretary of State's office, 1982.

13. Letter from David Schmidt, Editor, *Initiative News Report*, to Jean Johnson, Director of Special Projects, Office of the Secretary of State, Montana, February 6, 1984.

14. *The Initiative Process*, 23.

15. Personal communication from Representative Eleanor Myerson and her legislative aide, Shelley Beeby, July 1986.

16. Teachers or curriculum coordinators might wish to examine the *Chapter Handbook and Curriculum Guide* (1984), published by Students Against Driving Drunk (SADD, Box 800, Marlboro, MA 01752). The purpose of this organization is to "educate students concerning the problem of drinking and driving and to help each student become aware of the alcohol problem as it exists on the local, state and national level" (p. 29). The pamphlet contains sample proclamations, public service announcements, and letter of invitation to local officials. Begun in 1981, the organization has 10,000 high school chapters, 2000 junior high school chapters, and 300 college chapters. Although students are guided by a faculty

advisor, they are in charge of the organization's activities in their own schools.

17. It is not clear that most students (or adults) in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts knew about all the petitions for the official emblems or symbols the Commonwealth of Massachusetts now has at the time these petitions were going through the legislative process. An inspection of Chapter 2 of the *General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, entitled "Arms, Great Seal, and Other Emblems of the Commonwealth," reveals a number of recent additions to official symbols of the state. Within the past eight years, Massachusetts has acquired a state folk song, a state poem, a state marine animal, a state dog, a state fish, a state mineral, a state heroine, a state monument and building stone, a state fossil, a state rock, a state explorer rock, and a state historical rock. All students (and other residents) in a state should be aware in advance of a bill that affects the state in some official sense and have some opportunity to participate if they wish to.

18. I thank Marie Bolchazy, Language Arts Consultant, Naperville Community School District 203, Naperville, Illinois, for sending me copies of the writing assignment used in the assessment and samples written by the students.

19. Personal communication with Jo Ann Smith, elementary school teacher in Naperville Community School District 203, Naperville, Illinois, December 1985.

20. Demonstration lesson by Sandra Stotsky in the Rutherford County Public Schools, North Carolina, November 1982.

21. I thank Marie Bolchazy, Language Arts Consultant, Naperville Community School District 203, Naperville, Illinois, for sending me copies of the published letters, and I thank Alice Feeney for information about the assignment.

22. Unfortunately, most English/language arts textbooks label their sections on letter writing as "The Friendly Letter" or "The Business Letter," thus obscuring the fact that much formal writing is done for non-business purposes.

23. Personal communication from Suzanne Dever and the staff of Thayer Academy, August 1986.

24. Letter from Professor George Pasti, Jr., December 2, 1985.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Personal communication from Deborah McKinstry, social studies teacher at Tantasqua Junior High School, Sturbridge, Massachusetts, January 1986.

2. Unfortunately, a monthly meeting of the selectmen did not take place at the time the students finished their project and, thus, the students never did make an official presentation of their information.

3. Richard H. Bullock, "Athens/Arts: Involving Students in Research on Their Community," *College Composition and Communications* 36 (May 1985): 237-238.

4. Personal Correspondence from Tehani Collazo, August 1984.

5. I thank Shirley Brusco for sending me copies of her students' evaluations.

6. I thank Dale Zaklad for permission to reprint her letter.

7. I thank Mario Jardin, Chapter I, Secondary English Supervisor, New Bedford Public Schools, Massachusetts, for providing me with samples of writing from students in his Chapter I program.

8. *Writing Curriculum Guide* (Dedham, Massachusetts: Dedham Public Schools, 1985).

9. Personal communication from Barbara Merritt, January 1986.

10. Austin Wehrwein, "An Epistolary Lesson," in *Education Week*, 5 (29 May 1986).

11. Ellen Lazare Shatz, "Letter Writing in the Inner-City Classroom," in *Integrating Writing and Social Studies, K-6*, edited by Barry K. Beyer and Robert Gilstrap, (Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., 1982).

12. Personal communication from Susan Jones, January 1986.

13. Shelley Beeby, legislative aide to State Representative Eleanor Myerson, notes how rarely legislators receive a thank-you letter from constituents or other voters for the work they do in proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation, yet how much they appreciate receiving an expression of gratitude.

14. See, for example, Peter Butler et al, *Dear Congressman, Help* (Tallahasee, FL: Stone House, Inc., 1981).

15. I thank Ruth Derfler, GED/ADP Lead Teacher in the Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE), Somerville, Massachusetts, for giving me information about the civic writing activities students may do in such programs.

16. See, for example, Joan D. Berbrich, *Writing Practically* (New York: Amsco School Publications, Inc., 1976), 258-260.

17. I thank Alice Pierce for her help in selecting letters to the governor that she considered well-written.

18. I thank Susan Neuman for a copy of Senator Kraus' letter to her son.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Susan Florio and Joyce Howard Frank, "Literacy and Community in the Classroom: A Case Study of Betterburg," in *Integrating Writing and Social Studies, K-6*, edited by Barry K. Beyer and Robert Gilstrap (Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Education Consortium, 1982).

2. I thank Kathleen Callanan for giving me copies of her students' work and the letters from Representative Studds.

3. I thank Charlene Jassim of Mound, Minnesota, for her description of the writing assignments she gives as part of a sixth-grade unit on Minnesota state government.

4. "The City Game, "The Election Game," and "The Town Meeting Game" are available from the Election Division, Office of the Secretary of State, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, State House, Boston, Massachusetts 02133.

5. Telephone conversation with Nancy Driscoll, Press Secretary, Public Affairs Division, Office of the Secretary of State, State House, Boston, Massachusetts, January 1986.

6. According to Connie Whitaker, a staff member of the States Information Center at The Council of State Governments, Lexington, Kentucky, there is no central compilation of curriculum materials provided by offices of the Secretaries of State. (Telephone conversation, January 1986)

7. I thank Jennifer Huntington, House Teacher, Brookline High School, Brookline, Massachusetts, for sending me

information and materials on the Brookline High School Town Meeting.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Interview with Alice Pierce, Director of the Governor's Correspondence Office, State House, Boston, Massachusetts, January 1986.

2. James Kinneavy, *A Theory of Discourse* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980).

3. In a summary of their recent research on collaborative writing in professional settings, entitled "Singular Texts/Plural Authors" (unpublished manuscript, 1986), Andrea Lunsford and Lise Ede point out that a great deal of collaborative writing takes place in the workplace despite the general belief that most writing is composed by solitary writers.

4. Barbara A. Hatcher and Beverly A. Chido provide useful and succinct information to teachers on how to help students write a letter to a legislator on an issue they have researched ("Tell It to Washington," *The Clearing House* 58 (February 1985): 253-256.

5. I thank Regina Hosey, Director, Grand Valley State Writing Consultancy, Grand Rapids, Michigan, for this suggestion.

6. Telephone conversation with Lawrence Harmon, Managing Editor of *The Jewish Advocate*, November 1985.

7. Lise Ede, *Public Discourse and Public Policy:* A Case Study (unpublished manuscript, 1983).

8. Joan D. Berbrich, *Writing Practically* (New York: Amsco School Publication, Inc., 1976).

9. Ibid., 243.

10. Telephone conversation with Lawrence Harmon.

11. Mary A. Hepburn, "What Is Our Youth Thinking? Social-Political Attitudes of the 1980s," *Social Education* 49 (November/December 1985): 671-677.

12. David Mathews, "Civic Intelligence," *Social Education* 49 (November/December 1985): 678-681.

13. John Dewey, "The School and Society," in *Dewey on Education: Selections with an Introduction and Notes*, edited by Martin S. Dworkin (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1959), 41.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Following is a bibliography on teaching about civic writing that has been prepared especially for elementary and secondary school teachers. Several items in this bibliography include an ED number, which identifies them as resources in the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) system. These resources are available in microfiche and paper copy from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information on prices write to EDRS 3900 Wheeler Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22304. Abstracts and descriptive information on these ERIC documents are published in *Resources in Education* (RIE). Most ERIC documents are available for viewing in microfiche at libraries that subscribe to the ERIC collection.

Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963.

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